

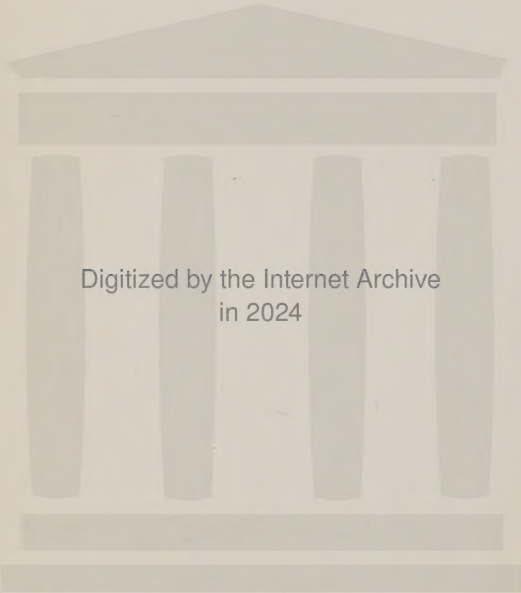


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# Art and Education

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*by*

JOHN DEWEY, ALBERT C. BARNES,  
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## Preface

THIS book owes its existence to the widespread demand for information about the purposes, activities and educational program of the Barnes Foundation. Painters, critics, teachers and many other persons interested in art or in education have requested such information in order to learn of the precise character of the Foundation's work. It seems advisable, therefore, to give in the present volume a conspectus of the work done.

The Foundation from the start was intended not only to offer instruction to individual students enrolled in its own classes or in those of allied institutions, but also to put before the public a tried and tested method for education in art, and an outline of what such education should be. To the latter end were issued various books written by members of its staff and also the *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*. This *Journal* was begun as an instrument both of construction and of controversy, for there was an obvious and long-existing need for putting before the public a statement of the living issues both in art and in education in art. The *Journal* itself ceased publication when its primary work was done, and is now out of print; but the insistent demand, from every part of the country, for copies of its issues, seems to indicate that its contents still have a function to fulfill.

Most of the articles in the *Journal* are republished here, together with other material elsewhere printed, for which credit is duly given. There has been a slight amount of revision in some of the articles for the pur-

pose of bringing out more clearly the thread of connection running through the whole. Since, however, some appearance of disjointedness may remain, it has seemed advantageous to have here a very brief statement of the general position of the Barnes Foundation. In everything published under its auspices, the prime and unwavering contention has been that art is no trivial matter, no device for the entertainment of dilettantes, or upholstery for the houses of the wealthy, but a source of insight into the world, for which there is and can be no substitute, and in which all persons who have the necessary insight may share. This insight, however, is impossible except by the aid of others' insight, especially of the insight of the past, for which another word is "tradition." At the same time, tradition merely imitated, carried on inertly, is worthless: there is no art unless tradition is used freely, freshly, and personally, as a means of individual expression. To the establishment of these fundamentals, with illustrations of their application, Section I is devoted.

In Section II, the same principles appear, combined with the educational principles of which the original and classic expression is found in the published works of Professor Dewey and more especially in his book, *Democracy and Education*. The stress here is upon method rather than upon any precise application, although a general type of application is indicated.

In Section III, social and institutional questions are treated because education in art is unfortunately carried on in large measure under conditions which foreordain its futility. Politics, mere prestige, and the activities of those who have wealth without intelligence or discrimination, or good intentions without discernment, are largely in control in existing institu-



tions and academies, and their hand is fatal to any real aesthetic cultivation. Any work which did not deal with them, and mention them by name, would be false to the cause of education in art.

A. C. B.



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*Section I*

ART AND ARTISTS





# Experience, Nature and Art<sup>1</sup>

By JOHN DEWEY

CONTEMPORARY theories of art generally suffer from inconsistency. They are only in part interpretations of art and of experience as these are to be observed today; in part, they represent a survival of opinions and assumptions inherited from the Greeks. According to Greek theory, art is a form of practice, and so incurs the reproach of being concerned with a merely subjective, changing and imperfect world. This was true of all arts, of those now classified as "fine" as well as of the useful crafts practised by the artisan. In contrast with both, science was regarded as a revelation—in fact, the only true revelation—of reality. It was thought to be through science alone that access is provided to the world as it is in itself, not colored or distorted by human wants or preferences. Art corresponded to production, science to "contemplation," and the productive was branded as inferior, an activity proper only to mechanics and slaves.

This view was a reflection in theory of the Greek social system, in which a menial class performed all necessary labor, and freemen and citizens alone enjoyed the fruits of that labor. Since the leisure class held the position of power and honor, its part in life was regarded as intrinsically superior, and the artist, who by the labor of his hands shaped the objects which

<sup>1</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, October, 1925. Adapted from Professor Dewey's book, *Experience and Nature*, Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago. Price \$3.00.

were the food of contemplation, belonged to the lower realm of nature and experience.

Contemporary opinion accepts, in the main, the Greek view that knowledge is contemplation, and that it alone reveals nature as nature is. The Greek disparagement of art it partly accepts and partly rejects; accepts it as regards the useful arts, which are clearly modes of practice, but rejects it as regards the fine arts. In fine art it makes a distinction between the experience of the artist, which is considered to be creative, and the experience of the beholder or connoisseur, which is regarded as passive. Of these, it ranks the artist above the connoisseur, the producer above the consumer. At the same time, although it regards knowledge as contemplation, it recognizes that science, the systematic pursuit of knowledge, is active, an affair of making experiments, and so belongs to the realm of practice.

These notions are consistent neither with each other nor, as a whole, with experience. The Greek view was sound in recognizing the continuity of "useful" with "fine" art; it erred in neglecting the connection of knowledge with experiment, and so in isolating knowledge from practice. If knowledge is truly contemplation, and is on that account superior to mere practice, then all arts, that of the painter no less than that of the carpenter, are inferior to science, and the painter stands in rank below the dilettante who looks at paintings. If, however, not knowledge but art is the final flowering of experience, the crown and consummation of nature, and knowledge is only the means by which art, which includes all practice, is enabled to attain its richest development, then it is the artist who represents nature and life at their best.

Current discussion of aesthetics and art falls into inconsistency about the active and passive rôles of art

largely because it confuses art as a process of execution, of creation of a type of material things, and art as the enjoyable appreciation of things so created. To avoid this inconsistency it is advantageous to use the word "artistic" to designate the activities by which works of art are brought into being, and to reserve the term "aesthetic" for the appreciation of them when created, the enhanced or heightened perceptions in which they result.

Although the view here defended asserts that there is no ultimate difference between the artist and the artisan, there is an obvious empirical difference between the activities and experience of the artist, as we actually find him, and those of the artisan. That the artist's life is the more humanly desirable, that it is the richer, more self-rewarding, more humane, none would deny. The difference, however, is not one between aesthetic contemplation and mere labor, but between those activities which are charged with intrinsic significance—which are both instrumental, means to more remote ends, and consummatory, immediately enjoyable—and those forms which are *merely* instrumental, are in themselves nothing but drudgery. This fact is due to nothing in the nature of experience or practice, but only to defects in the present economic and social order. To call the greater part of the productive activities now carried on "useful arts" is mere euphemism, by which the essential irrationality of the existing régime is concealed. Innumerable commodities which are manufactured by the "useful arts" are only apparently and superficially useful; their employment results not in satisfaction of intelligent desire, but in confusion and extravagance, bought at the price of a narrowed and embittered experience. There can be no true understanding of either practice or

aesthetic appreciation while practice is in large measure slavery, and while "aesthetic appreciation" is merely one of the forms of distraction by which intervals of respite from slavery are whiled away.

The degradation of labor is paralleled by a degradation of art. Most of what passes for art at present falls under three captions:

First, there is mere indulgence in emotional outpouring, without reference to the conditions of intelligibility. Such "expression of emotion" is largely futile—futile partly because of its arbitrary and willfully eccentric character, but partly also because the channels of expression currently accepted as permissible are so rigidly laid down that novelty can find acceptance only with the aid of violence.

In addition to this type—and frequently mingled with it—there is experimentation in new modes of craftsmanship, cases where the seemingly bizarre and over-individualistic character of the products is due to discontent with existing technique, and is associated with an attempt to find new modes of expression. It is aside from the point to treat these manifestations as if they constituted art for the first time in human history, or to condemn them as not art because of their violent departure from received canons and methods. Some movement in this direction has always been a condition of growth of new forms, a condition of salvation from that mortal arrest and decay called academic art.

Then there is that which in quantity bulks most largely as fine art: the production of buildings in the name of the art of architecture; of pictures in the name of painting; of novels, dramas, etc., in the name of literary art; a production which in reality is largely a form of commercialized industry in production of a

class of commodities that find their sale among well-to-do persons desirous of maintaining a conventionally approved status. As the first two modes carry to disproportionate excess that factor of difference, particularity and contingency, which is indispensable in all art, deliberately flaunting avoidance of the repetitions and order of nature, so this mode celebrates the regular and finished. It is reminiscent rather than commemorative of the meanings of things. Its products remind their owner of things pleasant in memory though hard in direct undergoing, and remind others that their owner has achieved an economic standard which makes possible cultivation and decoration of leisure.

Obviously no one of these classes of activity and products, or all of them put together, mark off anything that can be called distinctively fine art. They share their qualities and defects with many other activities and objects. But, fortunately, there may be mixed with any of them, and, still more fortunately, there may occur without mixture, process and product which are characteristically excellent. *This occurs when activity is productive of an object which affords continuously renewed delight.* This condition requires that the object be, with its successive consequences, indefinitely instrumental to *new* satisfying events. For otherwise the object is quickly exhausted and satiety sets in. Anyone who reflects upon the commonplace that a measure of artistic products is their capacity to attract and retain observation with satisfaction under whatever conditions they are approached, has a sure demonstration that a genuinely aesthetic object is not exclusively consummatory, but is causally productive as well. A consummatory object that is not also instrumental turns in time to the dust and ashes of boredom.

The "eternal" quality of great art is its renewed instrumentality for further consummatory experiences.

When this fact is noted it is also seen that limitation of fineness of art to paintings, statues, poems, songs and symphonies is conventional, or even verbal. Any activity that is productive of objects whose perception is an immediate good, and whose operation is a continual source of enjoyable perception of other events, exhibits fineness of art. There are acts of all kinds that directly refresh and enlarge the spirit and that are instrumental to the production of new objects and dispositions which are in turn productive of further refinements and replenishments. Frequently moralists make the acts *they* find excellent or virtuous wholly final, and treat art and affection as mere means. Aestheticians reverse the performance, and see in good *acts* means to an ulterior external happiness, while aesthetic appreciation is called a good in itself, or that strange thing, an end in itself. But on both sides it is true that in being predominantly fructifying the things designated means are immediately satisfying. They are their own excuses for being just because they are charged with an office in quickening apprehension, enlarging the horizon of vision, refining discrimination, creating standards of appreciation which are confirmed and deepened by further experiences. It would almost seem that when their non-instrumental character is insisted on what is meant were an indefinitely expansive and radiating instrumental efficacy.

It is the fact that art, so far as it is truly (art, is a union of the serviceable and the immediately enjoyable, of the instrumental and the consummatory, that makes it impossible to institute a difference in kind between useful and fine art. Many things are termed useful for



reasons of social status, implying deprecation and contempt. Things are sometimes said to belong to the menial arts merely because they are cheap and used familiarly by common people. These things of daily use for ordinary ends may survive in later periods, or be transported to another culture, as from Japan and China to America, and being rare and sought by connoisseurs, rank forthwith as works of fine art.) Other things may be called fine because their manner of use is decorative or socially ostentatious. It is tempting to make a distinction of degree and say that a thing belongs to the sphere of use when perception of its meaning is instrumental to something else; and that a thing belongs to fine art when its other uses are subordinate to its use in perception. The distinction has a rough practical value, but cannot be pressed too far. For in production of a painting or poem, as well as in making a vase or temple, a perception is also employed as a means for something beyond itself. Moreover, the perception of urns, pots and pans as commodities may be intrinsically enjoyable, although these things are primarily perceived with reference to some use to which they are put. The only *basic* distinction is that between bad art and good art, and this distinction between things that meet the requirements of art and those that do not applies equally to things of use and of beauty. Capacity to offer to perception meaning in which fruition and efficacy interpenetrate is met by different products in various degrees of fulness; it may be missed altogether by pans and poems alike. The difference between the ugliness of a meretriciously conceived and executed utensil and a meretricious and pretentious painting is one only of content or material; in form both are articles, and bad articles.

The relation of the aesthetic and the artistic, as above defined, may now be stated more precisely. Both are incidental to practice, to performance, but in the aesthetic the attained vision with which the artist presents us releases energies which remain diffuse and inchoate, which raise the whole level of our existence, but do not find issue in any single or specific form. In the artistic the existing consummation is utilized to bring into existence further analogous perceptions. A painter, for example, uses a picture not only to guide his perception of the world, but as a source of suggestions for painting additional pictures. Art in being, the active productive process, may thus be defined as an aesthetic perception, together with an *operative* perception of the efficiencies of the aesthetic object. A parallel contrast is to be found in scientific experience. The layman may by his knowledge of science understand the world about him much more clearly, and regulate his actions more effectively, than he could without it, but he is not called a scientist until he is able to utilize his knowledge to make fresh scientific discoveries. As to the scientist knowledge is a means to more knowledge, so to the artist aesthetic insight is a means to further aesthetic insight, and not merely to enhancement of life in general. The distinction between the aesthetic and the artistic, important as it is, is thus, in the last analysis, a matter of degree.

The meaning of the view accepted here may be made clearer if it is contrasted with the theory of art prevalent today in one school of critics, that aesthetic qualities in works of fine art are unique, separate not only from everything that is existential in nature but from all other forms of good. In proclaiming that such arts as music, poetry, painting, have characteristics unshared by any natural things whatever, such critics

carry to its conclusion the isolation of fine art from the useful, of the final from the efficacious.

As an example, we may consider that theory of art which makes the distinguishing quality of the aesthetic object its possession of what is called "significant form." Unless the meaning of the term is so isolated as to be wholly occult, it denotes a selection, for the sake of emphasis, purity, subtlety, of those forms which give consummatory significance to everyday subject-matters of experience. "Forms" are not the peculiar property or creation of the aesthetic and artistic; they are characters in virtue of which anything meets the requirements of an enjoyable perception. "Art" does not create the forms; it is their selection and organization in such ways as to enhance, prolong and purify the perceptual experience. It is not by accident that some objects and situations afford marked perceptual satisfactions; they do so because of their structural properties and relations. An artist may work with a minimum of analytic recognition of these structures or "forms"; he may select them chiefly by a kind of sympathetic vibration. But they may also be discriminatively ascertained; and an artist may utilize his deliberate awareness of them to create works of art that are more formal and abstract than those to which the public is accustomed. Tendency to composition in terms of the formal characters marks much contemporary art, in poetry, painting, music, even sculpture and architecture. At their worst, these products are "scientific" rather than artistic; technical exercises, and of a new kind of pedantry. At their best, they assist in ushering in new modes of art and by education of the organs of perception in new modes of consummatory objects, they enlarge and enrich the world of human vision. But they do this, not by discarding altogether

connection with the real world, but by a highly funded and generalized representation of the formal sources of ordinary emotional experience.

Thus we reach a conclusion regarding the relations of instrumental and fine art which is precisely the opposite of that intended by selective aestheticians; namely, that fine art consciously undertaken as such is peculiarly instrumental in quality. It is a device in experimentation carried on for the sake of education. It exists for a specialized use, use being a new training of modes of perception. The creators of such works of art are entitled, when successful, to the gratitude that we give to inventors of microscopes and microphones; in the end, they open new objects to be observed and enjoyed. This is a genuine service; but only an age of combined confusion and conceit will arrogate to works that perform this special utility the exclusive name of fine art.

Art is great in proportion as it is universal, that is, in proportion as the uniformities of nature which it reveals and utilizes are extensive and profound—provided, however, that they are freshly applied in concrete objects or situations. The only objects, insights, perceptions, which remain perennially unwithered and unstaled are those which sharpen our vision for new and unforeseen embodiments of the truth they convey. The “magic” of poetry—and pregnant experience has poetic quality—is precisely the revelation of meaning in the old effected by its presentation of the new. It radiates the light that never was on sea or land but that is henceforth an abiding illumination of objects.

# The Problem of Appreciation<sup>1</sup>

By ALBERT C. BARNES

THE approach to the problem of appreciation of art is made difficult by the unconscious habits and preconceptions which come to us from contact with a society which is but little interested in art. When other interests, such as those of a practical, sentimental or moral nature, directly affect the aesthetic interest, they are more likely than not to lead it astray, and the result is what may be called a confusion of values. Before trying to tell what the proper excellence in a painting is, we must make clear what it undeniably is *not*.

We miss the function of a painting if we look to it either for literal reproduction of subject-matter or for information of a documentary character. Mere imitation knows nothing of what is essential or characteristic, and documentary information is equally far afield. The camera records physical characteristics but can show nothing of what is beneath the surface. We ask of a work of art that it reveal to us what is profound, what significant qualities in objects and situations have the power to move us aesthetically. The artist must open our eyes to what unaided we could not see. In order to do that, the painter often needs to modify the familiar appearance of things and so make something which is, in the photographic sense, a bad likeness. All we can ask of a painter is whether, for example, in

<sup>1</sup> From *The Art in Painting* by Albert C. Barnes: Harcourt, Brace and Co. Price \$6.00.

a landscape, he has caught the spirit of the scene; in a portrait, if he has discovered what is essential or characteristic of the sitter. And these are obviously matters for judgment, not for photographic reproduction or documentary cataloguing. Another popular misconception is that a painter is expected to tell a story and is to be judged by his ability to make the story edifying or entertaining. This is not unnatural, since we are interested in real things because they play a part in the story which is life. A real work of art may, incidentally, tell a story, but error arises when we try to judge it by the narrative, or the moral pointed, instead of by the manner in which the artist has used his materials—color, line, space—to produce a work of plastic art; when, in other words, a literary or moral value has been mistaken for a plastic value.

Another error scarcely less destructive to genuine aesthetic appreciation is that which mistakes technical proficiency for artistic significance. Art is not only an expression of the artist's creative spirit, but also a kind of handicraft, a skill in employing a special technique. As in other handicrafts, some natural ability combined with instruction and practice may enable a person to handle a paint-brush; but it is certain that there are hundreds of capable craftsmen in paint for one real artist. It is not especially difficult to learn to recognize the devices, "the tricks of the trade," by which great painters secured their effects; but it is difficult to recognize greatness in these effects, to distinguish between professional competence and artistic genius. To look merely for professional competence in painting is academicism; it is to mistake the husk for the kernel, the shadow for the substance.

This error is really more serious than that of confusing photographic likeness or story-telling with art



values, because the novice usually knows that he is a novice and is willing to learn, but the academician supposes himself to have learned already, and his mind is usually closed to the existence of anything but technique. With his eyes fixed upon the forms in which the living spirit of the past has embodied itself, he neglects the contemporary manifestations of that spirit, and often refuses to see or acknowledge them when they are pointed out to him. This is the reason why the most formidable enemy of new movements in art has always been, not the indifferent public, but the hostile academician. The public does not know that what he says applies only to technique, and not to art itself, and is correspondingly impressed. His motive need not, of course, be a conscious motive, and doubtless often is not. The mere fact of novelty, to one who has systematically addressed himself to the old and familiar things, is an irritation. It challenges precious habits, it threatens to overturn judgments with which the academician has identified himself, and which are in consequence dear to him. Pride joins hands with natural human inertia to oppose what is living in the interest of what is dead.

What we have said so far is almost purely negative and the result is likely to be bewilderment. The positive phase of the problem is that of the formation of a set of new habits which would develop the attitude of searching in the painting for what is of value *in itself*, avoiding the extraneous matters above discussed. The problem of seeing and the problem of judging, however, are ultimately but one; that is, we learn to see what a picture is by learning what it ought to be. Consequently, a statement of the standard by which plastic art is to be judged is also a statement of the method by which it is to be observed.

# The Roots of Art<sup>1</sup>

By ALBERT C. BARNES

IN order to indicate the attitude, the point of view, from which works of art must be approached, if their specifically aesthetic quality is to be perceived, a brief statement of psychological fundamentals is necessary.

Everything that human beings do is ultimately dependent upon the feelings that things and acts awaken in them. There are pleasant experiences and unpleasant, and we all seek the pleasant and avoid the unpleasant. This is a tendency which needs no justification. Human beings are so constituted as to have preferences, and in the last analysis these preferences are something behind which we cannot go. Our feelings, if not irrational, are at least non-rational. In the long run, everything that we do is done for the sake of some experience intrinsically enjoyable, and even when we are compelled to accept pain and privation, we do so for the sake of a positive value which outweighs their unpleasantness.

To say that an experience is of positive value, that it is worth having for its own sake, is to say that in it an instinctive prompting finds fulfillment.<sup>2</sup> To eat when we are hungry, to turn away from what disgusts us, to be victorious when our will is pitted against that of another, are things good in their own right; they are

<sup>1</sup> From *The Art in Painting* by Albert C. Barnes: Harcourt, Brace and Co.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Mullen, *An Approach to Art*, pp. 13, 14. Barnes Foundation Press. Price \$1.25.

satisfactions of instincts and are enjoyed immediately, for their own sake. Of course, the enjoyment is greater when what is desired satisfies more than one instinct. Victory means the immediate experience of triumph; it may also mean the accomplishment of remoter ends, which have an instinctive appeal of their own; and the confluence of these separate satisfactions heightens our enjoyment in the experience of victory. In general, the ideal is approached as our emotions are harmoniously united in every act. Then every experience gains value from all the resources of our nature, and suffers loss from no sense of desire thwarted or damage done to any of the interests which we have at heart.

(The enjoyment of art is one of the experiences which are desirable for their own sake. It is, of course, capable of acquiring other values also. It may enable us to make a living; it may improve our morals or quicken our religious faith; but if we attempt to judge a work of art directly by its contribution to these ends, we have abandoned the track. A work of art presents to the spectator an opportunity to live through an experience which by its own quality vouches for its right to existence, and whatever other value it has depends upon this value.) If it lacks this, it is a counterfeit.

(Art, in other words, is one of the ways in which instinct finds satisfaction. It is not the ordinary way of instinctive satisfaction, however, since picture, statue, or musical composition prompts us to no course of practical action. (Our response to art takes the form of understanding, entering into the spirit of it, awakening in ourselves, in varying degrees, the experience of the artist. This involves effort and entails fatigue; work is done, the process is active and not passive; but the action does not, directly, produce effects in the real

world. Hence art is satisfaction of instincts, but with a marked difference; and our next problem is to see what this difference is.

The word most important at this point is "interest." "Interest" implies concern, not with ourselves, but with objective things, and concern which is permanent. A real interest is an identification of ourselves with something which is real independently of us, as when we speak of interest in music, in the work of Beethoven, or in another individual. It is, furthermore, comparatively enduring. Its essential characteristic is that it induces him who has it to take pains, to make efforts, and so to order his activities that the object of his interest takes form in his mind and becomes the propelling force of his activities. Persistence of effort is the indispensable condition of real interest. When this is lacking, we say that a professed interest is a sham or at least a delusion. A man who believes that he is interested in paintings, but who takes no pains to acquaint himself with the problems to be solved, who will not study the methods of presentation proposed, form some judgment through actual experience of their adequacy, is a mere dilettante.

That in which we have no real interest passes before our eyes without entering the range of our attention or leaving any traces in our memory. What has value for us—and this is an alternative expression for "what interests us"—is attended to in detail, and remembered. In general, the object of an interest has distinctness in its parts and coherence as a whole, and in consequence it arouses a specific emotion, appropriate to it as an individual thing, and not a mere mood, a vague, undistinguished sense of exhilaration, languor, lachrymosity, ineffability, or what not. One who goes to a symphony orchestra concert to pass the time, or

for social reasons, comes away with only the haziest ideas of what was played. But for one with a genuine interest in music, the concert means a series of intricate relationships between chords, melodies and movements, all woven into a unified whole which reveals the spirit of the composer. In other words, art is an expression of interest, and that interest depends upon the sensibility which makes us alive in the real world to things that to one not sensitive would not exist.

The foregoing statements indicate that instincts become effective realities only as they become organized interests. Such interests center about and develop real things; they also make up the individual self. The self is shadowy, insubstantial, futile, except in so far as it has objective interests; but it is also true that the objective world is a conglomeration of meaningless facts except as it is organized by the interests of living beings. The artist does what no camera, no mere imitation, no mere document, can do, namely, selects aspects for emphasis and gives significant order; that is, his work is a creation. But it is appeal to feeling that confers significance and establishes a principle by which the essential can be distinguished from the trivial or irrelevant. Things are important not in themselves but by virtue of their relation to feeling or interest, and since men differ in their interests, no single set of things or qualities in the real world is important in general or without qualification. A conflagration interests various people differently: to the chemist it means, chiefly, a process of oxidation; to an owner, it may mean loss of money; to an artist, it means line, color, mass, in a series of relationships which he enjoys.

So to draw out and make clear the true character of anything is the task of the artist. Feeling is involved, since *what* is brought out depends upon the individual

and his interests; and the satisfaction which instinct finds in comprehension, in imaginative realization, is one which is intrinsic to the process of bringing out, not something added afterwards: the person who comprehends and appreciates the work of art shares the emotions which prompted the artist to create. The artist gives us satisfaction by seeing for us more clearly than we could see for ourselves, and showing us what an experience more sensitive and profound than our own has shown him.

We all take some pleasure in seeing how things look, in observing their color, their contour, their movement, whether they are moving in our direction or not. In so far as we are successful in finding what is characteristic, appealing, or significant in the world about us, we are, in a small impromptu way, ourselves artists.<sup>3</sup> But the man who is an artist because the interest in understanding and depicting things is a master passion with him, sees more deeply and more penetratingly than we do, and, seeing better, can also show better. His interests compel him to grasp certain significant aspects of persons and things of the real world which our blindness and preoccupation with personal and practical concerns ordinarily hide from us.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Mullen, *An Approach to Art*, p. 23. Barnes Foundation Press.

# Art as Creative <sup>1</sup>

By LAURENCE BUERMAYER

WE have urged and illustrated the point that aesthetic experience in all its forms is an active process, that it enters into many activities other than those ordinarily associated with the word "art," and that when fine art itself is in question we can most fully understand it by conceiving it as a type of doing rather than as something undergone. Our problem now is to analyze the actual process of creation, to see how what is given at the start of the artist's labors is transmuted into the achieved result.

Art in general, as we have said, is an expression of emotion, an expression which consists not, as with ordinary expressions, in gestures, exclamations, or physically efficacious acts, but in an envisagement of the moving object in the terms or qualities that the emotion has seized upon and laid bare as significant. The object, so envisaged, is never identical with the object as it exists independently, either as a physical thing or as it is conventionally perceived. Rather, the aesthetic object is such a reorganization of conventional impressions, a reinterpretation of familiar fact, as will reveal their distinctive significance for feeling or emotion. It is this principle which outlaws both photographic and academic art, in both of which absence of individuality on the artists' part, of personal creative force, is

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *The Aesthetic Experience* by Laurence Buermayer: Barnes Foundation Press. Price \$1.50.



obvious from a meaningless or stereotyped version of the thing seen. Expression of emotion by interpretation of what has moved us is always and everywhere the essence of the aesthetic experience, and the aesthetic experience is present wherever we find such interpretation, in the world of affairs and personal relations as well as in the world of "art" ordinarily so called.

Emotions are in the first instance aroused by objects which have a practical relation to our welfare, and art, if it is to offer a foothold for feeling, must in some degree possess an affinity with such objects. The version of natural things which art gives may be far removed from the original, for emotions contain the possibility of almost infinite transformation, and may travel far afield from the occasion of their first or "natural" appearance. This is true in ordinary life, as well as in the passage from ordinary life to art. What we love, hate, despise, admire, does not remain the same as our sensibilities develop and become refined. Between disgust at a bad smell or at a swarm of vermin, and disgust at a contemptible act or vulgar jest, there is a wide gulf, though in important psychological respects the emotion is the same in both. By what bridge, we must ask, does feeling cross the gulf between objects so disparate in kind?

The answer is clear. Our feelings respond, or may be taught to respond, to objects *analogous* to those which originally excited them, and analogy is community of form. The community of form, the resemblance, may be slight, and then the analogy is said to be subtle, but some formal identity there must be if feeling is to be relevant at all. The passage of emotion to art, in other words, depends upon form: art as a whole is creative by virtue of its selection, transformation, and reorganization of the forms of nature; within



art, the process of creation is one of reorganization of the forms employed by previous art, and their diversification and enrichment by forms freshly borrowed from nature.

The meaning of form is essentially the same, whether applied to natural objects or to the things of art. All things possess characteristic quality or individuality chiefly through their form. It is by virtue of this that they are recognized for what they are, and increasingly so as recognition becomes penetrating or assured. We may say that a chair or a table or a human face gives us a sensation, but this is a loose and colloquial manner of speaking. It is the arrangement, and not, except incidentally, the particular quality of the sensations, that confers individuality upon any perception. A face is just the face it is because of the disposition of the features, the size of the eyes and the distance between them, the proportions of the forehead. Even what seems a matter of simple sensation, for example, the complexion, is formal, in that it depends upon color-contrast and not upon mere color. What we have merely an "impression" of, we know vaguely, superficially, uncertainly. In other words, nothing really known or grasped is a mere blur of qualities; its qualities are organized into a pattern or network of relations, and this pattern constitutes its form.

It is obvious from the above that whenever experience presents us with recognizable objects, whenever it is intelligible, it presents us with such forms. In ordinary personal life, these forms are organizations of events, relations of changes in one object to changes in another. Every impulse or instinct picks out of the chaos of our impressions such as are indicative of other impressions to be anticipated, sees in some of the things

going on about us signs, warnings, or promises of things not yet seen, and correlates with them appropriate acts of coöperation or opposition on our part. To be angry is to observe a sign of obstruction to our will, to look for means of overcoming the obstruction, and to be prepared to take action accordingly. It is to see all these things in relation, so that they compose into a single plot or drama: indeed, most of the plots or dramas in literature are variations on a few simple formulas outlining the normal causes and courses of our more primitive instincts. This illustrates the characteristic passage of forms from life into art, and as art becomes great art, it increasingly makes such a selection of forms that human desire is freed, so far as possible, from the meaningless distraction, the obstructions without significance, that dog its steps in the real world.

Of course, the desires which art satisfies, even symbolically or impersonally, need not be those springing from such obvious and practically important instincts as fear, sex or pugnacity. They may be as central and pervasive as our fondness for rhythm or as incidental and trivial, in themselves, as our liking for a particular combination of colors. But of all the literally innumerable combinations of sensation which the artist can cause us to experience, only those have value which specifically appeal to something in our native constitution.

The creativeness of art, in summary, resides in its extraction, from the vast number of forms given in experience, of those which are peculiarly significant for emotion, and its reworking of these forms into what we may call a single coherent design. This design or form or vision is a grasp or understanding of the world, an illustration of what *is*, but it is creative in that the

illumination is one which nature, unassisted by the artist, is powerless to provide.

These generalities may be illustrated by a brief sketch of some important episodes in the history of painting. Such a sketch will make it clear how in the evolution of forms, in which the creative aspect of art emerges, the artist is constantly drawing both on nature and on the traditions of art, the funded accomplishments of his predecessors. In the course of the development as personal expressiveness increases, truth increases also—a paradox if we think of art as a bare addition to experience or embellishment of nature, but a natural and inevitable consequence when we have understood the truth that art is a revelation of nature, though to be sure a revelation possible only through the agency of conscious human beings.

At the very beginning of modern art, we find painting subordinated to the end of illustration, especially illustration of religious themes. It was, in the main, almost flat, and its figures and background were almost entirely conventional in form. Drawing was exclusively line-drawing, and though the objects were colored, they were constructed by means of line and shading. To the shapes so drawn, color was added as though by an after-thought.

Later the Florentine painters conceived their pictures in three dimensions, and the objects in them were made to seem as tangible as possible. With this achievement, a new set of resources were put at the painter's disposal. He was encouraged to look for more in the real world, since he was able to provide new relationships between the elements in his compositions, and to endow his world with more of the fulness of reality. His new and more pregnant form enabled him to unify a greater variety of material, and he was

both more true to nature and more free to modify nature in the interests of his individual conception.

The Venetians lent to their pictures a much greater splendor by enriching their palette and adding to the formal arrangement in space the effects of color-harmony. In addition, they used color as a constituent of objects with such effects that the objects appear more truly solid than in the Florentines. The freshness, depth and glow of swimming, harmonious, unifying color thus achieved, represented an enrichment of nature as it exists and a new instrument for lending it aesthetic significance. It represented a new form. In the Florentines generally, color and shape remained distinct and the effect of three-dimensional solidity which appears in the majority of their work is attained by the contrast of light and shadow rather than by color incorporated into the structure of objects. In many instances, that method of using light to the comparative exclusion of structural color, gives to the work of many of the Florentines, even Leonardo, the effect of deficiency of plastic means and leads to a somewhat stereotyped form which degenerated into an academic formula in some of the lesser men, Luini for example. With Rubens appeared a combination of the rich color of the Venetians with some of the technical devices of the Florentines for achieving the solidity of objects, and at the same time a heightened sense of movement and rhythm, a suggestion of forces acting in three dimensions, and of tumultuous activity. In his form, as in Titian's, the sharp contrast between line and color disappeared; color itself became more an instrument of draughtsmanship and one of the principal means of rendering solidity and of unifying the picture. Here as elsewhere, each new form makes available a new set of natural resources, and enables the painter so to

modify and reshape this material that the result not only more truly grasps but more greatly glorifies the real world.

In Velasquez, though color, space-organization and movement show no further advance, an additional motif, realism, makes its appearance. Rubens made all that he touched grandiose, tempestuous; his pictures seem almost like the cataclysms of nature. Velasquez painted in a much more restrained style. He advanced upon all his predecessors, however, in his unimpassioned yet penetrating eye for the secret of his subject, in his ability to find in it that which lent itself to plastic representation and at the same time had characteristic significance. His concern was thus partly for subject-matter, yet not at all for "literary" subject-matter. He gave to all that he reproduced its plastic equivalent, and so promoted a real synthesis between color and shape, on the one hand, and the theme which they embodied. This of course had in some degree been done before, but in Velasquez there is far less reliance upon chance associations such as the "nobility" of classic scenes, the religious feeling which springs from ecclesiastical subjects, the power that depends upon magnitude and indication of great objective forces.

In the Nineteenth Century there was a development of forms not unlike the development during the Renaissance. Starting with David and Ingres, we find a rather stilted conventionality of theme, a sharp division between line and color, with the color dull in David, brighter but still superficial in Ingres. With Delacroix comes a great access of richness in color accompanied by an almost equal gain in movement and force. These latter, however, depended in part upon comparatively adventitious means, upon the suggestions provided by romantic and melodramatic subjects; but his more vivid

color is an integral part of the shapes he painted. Daumier scarcely used color at all, but he revealed the possibilities of organization, of solid reality, in tone, and recovered much of the formal power of Rembrandt.

Courbet introduced again the realism of Velasquez, added an earth-born force and pungency to his paintings, and so stripped away the conventionality of vision which kept Ingres and Delacroix at arm's length from their world. Manet carried realism to completion, achieved a degree of fidelity to his themes worthy of Velasquez, and increased the repertoire which in Courbet had been restricted to comparatively few aspects. Degas employed Ingres's line to express movement, and so aided in restoring to plastic art that type of organization. The impressionists were in the main satisfied to use the forms already current in their time, except that by studying minutely the variations in color under varying illumination, they added new richness to the harmonies and contrasts which color presents, and in that sense augmented painting's armory of forms. Cézanne achieved a solidity of objects by a new method of modeling in color and by the aid of intentional distortions.

In Renoir the achievements of Nineteenth Century painting reached their consummation. In him, color and line and solidity fuse. Shapes are not drawn and modeled and then colored: color, combined with light, is the material out of which they are made up, and the color itself is of greater richness, variety, and brilliance than in any of his predecessors. Not only is color used for drawing and the rendering of solidity, but the color-relations themselves are a formal and unifying element in a high degree. His composition unites balance, rhythm, and movement, and the whole conveys per-



fectly the spirit of what is portrayed. In him, in a word, the forms of his predecessors are united.

However, the development of new forms is not the same as progress towards an absolute goal. No doubt new values are revealed as painting goes on its way, but there is loss as well as gain. This is true of progress of all sorts. In life in general we have paid for our increased command over nature, our more humane disposition towards our fellows, and our more complete self-consciousness by a loss of the simplicity and directness that cannot survive in a time of many and variously conflicting aims. Just how we have lost, we may see by comparing George Meredith with Homer. So in painting, as new effects become possible, old effects, not necessarily less valuable, become impossible. The naturalness of Manet may seem a great advance over the artificiality of David; but when we compare Manet with Titian or Tintoretto we are less certain that his style is the better. The stateliness, the magnificence, of the Renaissance portraits is something which our age cannot match, much as it may have surpassed the Renaissance in other respects. Progress, to repeat, is partial, and is always accompanied by retrogression. It is therefore futile to ask whether in any absolute sense Renoir and Cézanne represent an advance upon Giorgione and Rubens.

If we turn to literature we find the same gradual disentanglement of what is characteristic or essential in experience from the adventitious or irrelevant material in which, for primitive apprehension, it is set.

The form of a drama may be regarded as the working-out of a situation, the episode or series of episodes which follow from the interaction of a set of characters who are brought together under particular conditions. It is the revelation of what such a situation does to

such characters, and the situation and characters are chosen with reference to a single effect. In *Othello*, for example, we have the state of affairs created by a misalliance, a marriage between two persons of antecedents so diverse that any understanding between them is precarious, and the condition is complicated, and given tragic import, by the presence of a third person who wishes and is able to foment discord. Iago is able to persuade Othello that Desdemona is false to him; Othello thereupon kills Desdemona, and on finding that he has been misled and that Desdemona is innocent, kills himself. Upon Othello's suicide, that is to say his pronouncement and execution of judgment upon himself, hangs the moving and tragic effect of the whole play, since it vindicates his essential nobility, his power of acting as judge in his own case no less justly than in his wife's. If he were a lesser man, his ruin might be pathetic but it would not be tragic. Just that issue, in other words, is essential to a form in which the tragic emotion can be adequately embodied.

It is impossible, however, to avoid asking the question whether the same situation and its issue would have the same emotional force today. We may observe that its force depends essentially upon acceptance by the reader or spectator of a set of conventions about jealousy, "honor," and retributive justice. But if we no longer regard retributive justice as divinely ordained, if it has come to appear as a barbarous, or at least a mediaeval superstition, *Othello* appears at the end pathetic, doubtless, as the victim of an illusion, but fundamentally stupid, and so not fully tragic. The form of the play, that is to say, no longer seems adequate to Shakespeare's purpose: it has ceased to be of universal human significance, and become essentially a document in Elizabethan conventionality.

The same sort of decay in a literary form or motif is



seen in Mr. D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. It was once the fashion to make marriage the climax of love stories, and to represent the difficulties to be surmounted as residing in external circumstances, such as parental objections, the machinations of rivals, or any of the familiar causes of slips between cup and lip. But modern writers, with a more adequate sense of what is likely to come between individuals, reverse the order of events. Marriage is not necessarily or even usually the consummation of this particular relationship: it may be merely the prelude to it; and the really significant events may come after the ground is clear and the persons thus set free from irrelevant hindrances begin to discover whether or not they can enjoy a richer experience together than either could find in isolation. In this instance, as in the preceding, a form has been shown by experience to lack true expressiveness, to be inadequate to the content that is to go into it.

These examples indicate that the value or finality of a form cannot be judged by any formula which can be abstractly stated and applied infallibly. Its expressiveness must be judged by the reaction of an individual as a complete personality, by its appeal to feeling. This reaction, this feeling, are the outgrowth of a multitude of habits, convictions, and preferences, of which many, and those not the least important, cannot be brought into consciousness by their possessor. Absolute finality, in a word, is impossible in aesthetic judgment or appreciation. But absolute finality has already taken flight from science, it seems to be abandoning morals and its persistence in dogmatic religion is a fact which lends itself to various interpretations. If no creation in art is final, we may find solace in the thought that future artists will not be reduced to a traffic in conventionalities.

# Art and the Ivory Tower<sup>1</sup>

By LAURENCE BUERMAYER

IN the minds of many the terms "art" and "the ivory tower" mean the same thing. Not everyone, it is true, would use words so figurative or so high-flown as "the ivory tower" to describe what he means by art, but there are many equivalent expressions for the abstractness, the remoteness, conceived to be characteristic of it. What is near at hand, a part of our ordinary concerns, is not thought to be art: to encounter art we must go to the museum, the opera-house, the "classical" work of literature. When we do meet it we are a little uncomfortable, and also a little proud, for we are improving our minds, cultivating our sensibilities. Incidentally, we are challenging an investigation of our sincerity, and courting ridicule if the investigation goes against us. We are attempting to be better than our fellows, and if we fail the result is ignominy. In any case, we are setting ourselves apart, for better or for worse.

Along with this view goes usually a readiness to deplore the indifference to art, on the part of the public, which is said to be characteristic of our time as it was not of the Periclean Age, or of the Thirteenth Century in Western Europe. The ugliness of a great part of our material surroundings, the present low estate of the artist, and the general sordidness of much of our life, need not be disputed. But it is a question whether

<sup>1</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, May, 1925.

responsibility for this lamentable state of affairs is to be laid wholly at the door of those who are deaf to the gospel of art as that is ordinarily preached. So long as art is considered to be, by its nature, removed from the world in which we live and the things which naturally interest us there, the "swinish multitude" is perhaps not too severely to be castigated if it prefers the sty to the walled garden.

There is, however, a view of art which does not look to the ivory tower or the walled garden for its ideal. To distinguish this view from that usually held, we may begin with a point apparently trivial. In popular speech, the terms "artist" and "painter" are used interchangeably. The same is true of "sculptor," "composer," or "poet," and "artist": in each case the artist is regarded as someone who can do something that we ordinary mortals cannot. Expression in ordinary prose, however, is not considered an art, since all of us are capable of that. Art and a specialized skill thus become one and the same thing. Whatever else the artist is or is not, he is in a class apart from his fellows, and the connoisseur or the aesthete in a measure shares his distinction. This, roughly, is the popular equivalent of the ivory-tower view.

In contrast, an opinion has gained ground in recent years that art is primarily not a kind of technique or skill, like the ability to play chess, but that it is identical with all individual perception of the world and the things about us. Those familiar with recent discussion of aesthetics will at once recognize this as the view of Benedetto Croce. For Croce, the most immediate clue to the meaning of art is to be found, not in the things that most of us cannot do, such as the composition of symphonies or the carving of statues, but in what, more or less, everyone can do. We can all talk,

he says; therefore, if we would know what the artist does, we need only consider what we do when we use words to make our ideas or impressions communicable. All expression is art: we express ourselves whenever we look at the world, listen to the sounds there, and give to our fellowmen an intimation of what we have seen and heard. Really, the heart of expression is to be found in the immediate experience of apprehending. Words, like chisel or brush, serve merely as a means of communication.

Croce's view, which has gained a considerable vogue, suffers as much from excessive catholicity (at least in the hands of its interpreters) as does the traditional view from excessive exclusiveness. If we are all artists, the degrees of artistry become relatively unimportant, and attempted education in art is an impertinence. Complacency is no less fatal to growth than blind idolatry; however, the Crocean view does bring us closer to realities than the opposed opinion that art is inseparable from craftsmanship, and until it is understood a true aesthetics can scarcely be begun.

We ordinarily suppose, when looking at an object, that we see all of it that is there to be seen. We think of our mind as like a camera, faithfully reproducing whatever is before it. If we are unable to describe what we see, or paint a picture of it, that is merely because of our deficient mastery of words or paintbrush. The artist is thus the man who can reproduce his experiences, while we too have the experiences in spite of the fact that we cannot coin them into works of art. A very rudimentary knowledge of psychology suffices to destroy this error. What we ordinarily see in any object is a mere blur of qualities, from which only such traits as are practically important stand out. We may notice, in looking at a tree, whether it bears fruit, or

whether it casts enough shade to make a cool resting-place; we may see that it is a hard-wood tree, and therefore commercially valuable, or that it is infested with parasites, and so in need of spraying. But these are only a fraction of its qualities, and the rest of them, the texture of its bark, the set of its branches, the precise shape and color of its leaves, the symmetry of its total form, are likely to be disregarded. So with all things. We notice a house far away, and if we are in need of shelter we estimate the distance to it and the chances of our gaining admittance. The arrangement of doors and windows, on the other hand, the harmony between color of stone and color of roof, the number of chimneys, and so on, may be entirely disregarded. So too of the signs by which we judge of its distance: its apparent size, its relation to intervening objects, the clarity of its outline. Our perceptions, in brief, are very vague indeed, and it is because of this vagueness, and not of any mere lack of technique, that we cannot describe or reproduce what we see.

Of course, this is not true only of things literally *seen*. The persons about us are equally hazy. We usually want to know only what we need fear or what we may hope from them, and so we detect only the signs of friendly or hostile intent, of trustworthiness or dishonesty. The result is that we can tell little about them. We can indicate how they entertain or bore us, whether they are kindly or malicious in disposition, but how their lives feel to them, how the world appears in their eyes, is something of which we can say little. As our understanding of a man grows, the sense of our ignorance of him grows also, and we become aware that we shall never fully grasp the springs of his action, the hidden sources of his thoughts, his hopes and his fears.

The artist's problem is thus revealed. It is not, primarily, to put upon canvas or paper a vision which may be had merely by turning the eye in a particular direction. After the gaze has been fixed, and before the pen or paintbrush is used, comes the most significant part of the artist's work. "The person to be painted stands before the artist like a world to discover." The seeing, the interpretation—it is this that exacts the labor and, when done, attests the triumph. He who can do it is the artist because he has something to say; he who cannot, whatever the skill with which he can repeat what others have said, is not an artist but an artisan, a tradesman; and since his pictures or his books, considered merely as material objects, are less useful than food or shelter, he stands in rank with the purveyor of cosmetics, and below the mason or the husbandman.

If to see and to interpret are art, then, it is true, we are all artists. But if, priding ourselves on the distinction, we forget that seeing and interpreting are the most arduous of human undertakings, we cannot be too quickly reminded of the debt we owe to those who have preëminently succeeded in the task, and who are artists in the distinctive sense. For most of us, and for all of us most of the time, seeing is a mechanical registration of pitiably meagre impressions, and "interpretation" is a hasty consignment to pigeon-holes made for us by others long ago. "Man lives not by bread alone, but chiefly by catchwords"—if we doubt this we need only ask ourselves how often we really judge an individual case on its merits, without recourse to some table of virtues and crimes, some set catalogue of things to be admired and things to be reprobated. Our world is ordinarily one of abstractions, of "shadow-shapes that come and go"; it is bloodless and lifeless.

The proof of this is our attitude toward the new, toward anything that will not fit easily into one of the pigeon-holes of our mind. In interpreting the familiar we are simply living on accumulated intellectual capital, chiefly that bequeathed us as children of our particular time and people. It is as little an aesthetic achievement to see what everyone else sees as it is a scientific achievement, at the present date, to think of water as  $H_2O$ . It is the new which we really judge, which we truly *see*, and by which, in turn, we are judged; yet whenever our feelings are concerned we are comfortable only in the presence of what is familiar and well worn. What is really novel rarely challenges a desire to understand and render justice, but almost always an impulse to disregard, to condemn, to destroy. Of course, what is new does not necessarily mean what was produced in the current year; what is old may be new to *us*, or what is remote in space; but the closed mind is as reluctant to see in a new light what belongs to the time of Cheops as to revise its ideas of contemporary events. To see as we have always seen, to think as we have always thought—this is dear to the unregenerate nature of all of us.

An immovable conservatism, however, is no more destructive to the perception of fresh and living aspects in the world about us than is the absence of any traditions whatever. If we have eyes to see at all, it is not merely because Nature has given them to us, but also because other men have found out how to use *their* eyes, and so have taught us. Temperament unguided by tradition yields not originality but eccentricity—a meaningless eccentricity, because it is only by modification and enrichment of a tradition already in existence that the contributions of individuals can be added to the general store of culture. Between rigid



habit and centrifugal dispersion of energies the artist, like the scientist, must steer a middle course: his success depends upon avoiding the extremes of mechanism and anarchy. Only so can he see and, in seeing, create a world distinctively his own. Distinctively, yet not exclusively, for when he has fashioned his world in a form which others can see, it becomes their world also, and he becomes, in so far forth, one of the creators of the human mind.

We are so accustomed to think of the human mind, like the human body, as having taken form when the race reached human estate, that an expression implying that the mind is still in process of creation may seem merely paradoxical, or at least figurative. But the mind is not an organ, like the heart or lungs; it properly includes the whole world of which we can be conscious; and this is built up gradually, through the labor of everyone who receives, transmits, and especially enriches our entire cultural tradition. Since the artist plays a distinctive and irreplaceable rôle in this cultural development, we can only judge his true importance by seeing how the development takes place.

The savage, doubtless, as he looks at the material world about him, can recognize the practically important features of the scene. He can identify the path through the wilderness, the way to his hunting-ground and the way home again. He can detect the color of the tiger's skin, and the cloud that presages rain or the lightning-flash. But, so far as we can judge, the tiger is merely a competitor for his food-supply, and on occasions a dangerous enemy to himself—never a being of whom he would ask the question,

"In what distant deeps or skies  
Burned the fire of thine eyes?"

or

"Did he who made the lamb make thee?"



If *we* can see the tiger as something other than a large predacious feline of nocturnal habits, with an occasional fondness for human flesh, if we can think of him as a particularly vivid embodiment of the fire of life, and marvel at the inexhaustible variety in which that life clothes itself—if we can do this, it is through no virtue of our own, but because our imagination has been quickened by a poet's touch.

Not the savage only, but many an ancestor much nearer us, perceived a world poor, mean, and drab compared with ours. The Greeks, as their language indicates, could discriminate only a small number of separate colors, and there is little or no sense of landscape in their literature. If "the mountains look on Marathon," it was not a Greek poet who informed us of it; indeed, the sense of Nature as something with a life of its own, apart from the life of humanity, is distinctively modern, and but for the naturalistic bent of mind that came with and after the Renaissance we should probably be almost destitute of it. This bent of mind was scientific as well as aesthetic; but if it is true to say, "The heavens declare the glory of Kepler and Newton," it is no less true to say, "The heavens declare the glory of Tintoretto and Claude Lorrain."

It is not only in giving color and spaciousness to the visible world, animating it with its own soul and setting our imagination free in its presence, that art does its work. No less than material things are our fellow-men transfigured when we see them in the light of art. Even without the aid of art we can, it is true, observe our fellows' actions as they go about their business, marry, bring up their children, grow old and die. Our weal and woe are too closely intertwined with theirs to permit us to be forgetful of them: we must in any case study their wishes, observe the rules that make a com-

mon life endurable, and offer them inducements for services desired. For that infinitesimal minority of them who are interesting to us as persons, we instinctively strive to do more, to offer kindnesses without expectation of reward, and to share the joys and sorrows that lend significance to experience. But while we trust to utility and instinct to guide our human associations, how halting the coöperation, how feeble the insight! Rites celebrated together, song and story embodying common delights and aspirations, are what make shared experience, in any pregnant sense, possible, and these things, whatever their ostensible purpose, are aesthetic in quality.

Perhaps no better example of this could be found than in the rôle that the Homeric poems played in Greek civilization. It is sometimes said that the greatness of that civilization was partly due to the fact that the Greeks had no sacred books, in the sense that the Jews had; that is, that they had no rigid and binding code of laws which everyone was expected to obey in every detail. This is not quite true, since Homer was almost an oracle for them; it is true, however, that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were less a prescription of a precise way of life than an embodiment of ideals, which owed their authority in no small degree to the glamour lent by the Homeric manner to the experiences reflected in them. In thus providing ideals which were embodied in exceedingly vivid and moving imagery, the poems gave to the Greeks a fund of vicariously enjoyed experiences, which shaped the purposes and crystallized the feelings of the Greek race as a whole, and at the same time did not so entirely fix them as to make variation impossible. Hence the possibility both of individualism in thought and feeling, and of com-

munication between individuals, and consequently the birth of genuine reflection and personal distinction.

In modern times the development of the novel is perhaps the best illustration of the work of the artist in making individuals intelligible to each other. The novel is the form of art at present most universally enjoyed, and it is from novels, at least as much as from association with other individuals, that many of us derive our conceptions of human nature and of its possibilities. Furthermore, it is from these conceptions that our ideals for ourselves chiefly arise. Not that the novelist should directly indicate or recommend ideals: if he does that he becomes a moralist pure and simple. His contribution to life, to morals, is less direct but not less essential. Unless we are content to take all our moral laws on authority, we are obliged to judge of the goodness or badness of our acts by their effects on others, by the contribution they make to human welfare generally. To do this, we must enter imaginatively into the purposes of others, and it is in literature that human purposes are most effectively set forth. Law, custom and instinctive sympathy are of little use when we are dealing with the manifestations of human nature that are new or that lie outside the familiar circle of our acquaintanceship: universal human nature becomes intelligible only through art.

To make human nature intelligible to itself—that is the real purpose of art, that, and not any construction of a sanctuary for those who find the world of practical affairs too much for them. The artist makes human nature intelligible, not, like the psychologist, by analysis of it in the abstract, but by showing imaginatively the objects and activities in which it can find satisfaction. His command of a recognized medium,

paint, words, musical sound, is necessary if he is to make what he imaginatively divines common coin, but it is in the divination, the vision, that he really exercises his vocation. This, and this only, is what makes him not a purveyor of amusement but a creator of life.

# Mysticism and Art<sup>1</sup>

By LAURENCE BUERMAYER

MYSTICISM means, psychologically, a sense of profound and moving identification with something not ourselves. It means also that the identity felt is not demonstrable, in the sense that a man's legal nationality is demonstrable, or his membership in a club or other organization. In mystical states of mind, in other words, we are conscious of an expansion of our personality through union with something not ourselves, but this union is felt and not seen. The mystic feels that the dissolution of the boundaries which ordinarily separate him from the world is not merely fanciful or illusory, but represents a truth deeper than the facts which meet the eye. If, however, he is challenged to exhibit evidence for his conviction, he cannot do so. His feeling is not a conclusion drawn from verifiable premises, and it can never be made an intelligible or moving reality to the non-mystic.

The fact that the validity of mystical states is not demonstrable logically is what William James means by calling such states "ineffable." But this is not a fact characteristic of mysticism only. "No one," James writes, "can make clear to one who has never had a certain feeling, in what the worth or quality of it consists. One must have musical ears to know the value of a symphony; one must have been in love one's self to understand the lover's frame of mind. Lacking

<sup>1</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, April, 1926.

the heart or the ear, we cannot interpret the musician or the lover justly, and we are even likely to consider them weak-minded or absurd. The mystic finds that most of us accord to his experiences an equally incompetent treatment."

Mysticism is thus no isolated phenomenon. It is only a high degree of something which enters into all our experiences, so far as they are concerned with ultimate values. All these are incommunicable to anyone of radically different temperament. We may illustrate its nature, first, by contrasting it with its opposite; second, by indicating some of the types of experience which are tinged with mysticism, but are not mystical in the fullest sense.

The complete antithesis of mysticism is the sense of isolation, of solitude in an alien and uncomprehending world. A world in which there is nothing, human or nonhuman, to answer and coöperate with our powers, to take cognizance of our feelings, is what we find most difficult to endure. All our instincts look to help, of some sort, from our environment. The child's cry of pain or anger, which depends upon parental solicitude for its efficacy, is only the most obvious instance of this. In our more mature years, when we no longer expect to have our wishes granted as by a miracle, but take thought about means as well as about ends, we only make the miracle one step more remote. We offer inducements to others to do as we wish, but there would be no inducements to offer if others were not in some degree responsive to our acts. When either human beings or natural objects behave in a way we do not foresee and cannot control, when they disappoint our expectations, we are frustrated, at a loss: it is then that the sense of ourselves as limited, impotent and alone, is brought home to us with painful force.

It is obvious that the sense of union is always a relative matter. Since it is pain, grief, any frustration of our desires by the independent course of events, which makes us feel alienated from our world, the sense of union depends upon accord between ourselves and our environment. Some coöperation from the world we must have if we are to live at all. But so long as this coöperation is secured only by deliberate forethought and execution of plans, people or things may not seem hostile or intractable, but they give us no actual sense of identification. Expansion of the self, in the mystical sense, occurs only when we divine an actual sympathy, when our wills are answered by an immediate, unpurchased responsiveness. The difference is that between dealing with a stranger, who must receive a *quid pro quo* for everything he does, and a friend, who is directly moved by perception of our wants to try to gratify them. Whenever what we desire is immediately presented to us, without any need of driving a bargain or paying a price, the resulting sense of harmony is an approach to the mystical experience.

Of course, the mixture of responsiveness and indifference in things which we ordinarily encounter is not provocative of any intense mystical feelings. Patriotism at its height, however, in which we are overwhelmingly impressed by the unity in thought, feeling and purpose between our fellow-countrymen and ourselves, is a genuinely mystical feeling. For the patriot, as for every other human being, the union is incomplete, differences remain; but the differences with the foreigner are so much greater that the former sink into insignificance. So also with the man in love. The extent to which another individual meets and satisfies his desires, his imagination, makes the inevitable residuary discords too trivial to hold his attention: the



sense of union, temporarily at least, abolishes the sense of otherness, and mystical expansion is realized.

Unfortunately, this mystical expansion is often illusory. It is only too well known that love constantly attributes to its object virtues which do not exist, and that there are visions—for example, those of the drug-addict—which are merely visionary. "The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its ability to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour. Sobriety diminishes, discriminates and says no; drunkenness expands, unites and says yes. It is in fact the great exciter of the Yes-function in man. It brings its votary from the chill periphery of things to the radiant core. It makes him for the moment one with truth. Not through mere perversity do men run after it. To the poor and unlettered it stands in the place of symphony-concerts and literature; and it is a part of the deeper mystery and tragedy of life that whiffs and gleams of something which we immediately recognize as excellent should be vouchsafed to so many of us only in the fleeting earlier phases of what in its totality is so degrading a poisoning. The drunken consciousness is one bit of the mystical consciousness."<sup>2</sup> The frequent tendency of mystical states of mind to sink into mere illusion and emotionalism makes it necessary, therefore, in considering the relation of art to mysticism, to consider also the false aesthetic mysticism which corresponds to the patriotism which is jingoism, the love which is infatuation, the religion which is superstition.

The first and most obvious affinity between art and mysticism arises from the fact that art provides us with a world which is made by human beings for the

<sup>2</sup> James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 387.



direct satisfaction of their desires. This is true also of the material apparatus of life; but art, unlike the things which minister to our physical necessities, appeals immediately to personality. The artist puts his whole self into his work, as the engineer or manufacturer does not. The world he presents us with is a more humanized world than that of the man of business or the industrialist. Art without personality is nothing, but in the sphere of the merely useful, personality is a vanishing fringe around the borders of the mechanical.

Art, in other words, directly enlarges our vision by showing us the vision of our fellows, and in this sense it necessarily and always has some of the essential quality of mysticism. In a less specific manner, also, it contributes to the outgoing of the self into the world, by suggesting that the frustration of our desires by things over which we have no control is not final and absolute. How far the things of the world are really alien and hostile is always a problem. That they may be in a measure controlled materially, science and technology have made clear, but the actual command over "this sorry scheme of things entire" which either individuals or the race can exert, is infinitesimal. Art, in showing a peculiar sort of responsiveness in matter, its capacity for assuming forms which immediately satisfy our human desires, provides a presumption if not a promise that the unexplored remainder of the world may not be wholly alien or indifferent to us. In this again it joins hands with the mystical experience.

This is true even of the art of a writer like Lytton Strachey, or of a painter like Degas, both of whom seem essentially detached and ironical. It is only, however, as we approach artists whose interpretation of the world as a whole is colored by personal feeling,

who seek to make the totality of things a living reality, that we come to art which is in the fullest sense mystical. We have mysticism at its height, in other words, when the harmony between the self and the world, realized in ordinary life only now and then, is taken to be the key to all experience. Then what is hostile or indifferent is regarded as essentially illusory or transient, everything is felt to be full of life, and at heart akin to ourselves. Union with the world is not a casual or momentary episode but the ultimate truth of things, and the responsive spirit is everywhere. The artists who give us this sense of all-pervasive life are the mystics *par excellence*. Dante, Milton and, in a somewhat different sense, Goethe, are essentially mystics; Beethoven and César Franck have more of the mystical quality than Mozart or Debussy, Giotto than Piero della Francesca, Rembrandt than Rubens.

In painting, the first and most obvious expansion of the self comes simply from the discovery of a wealth of relationships, harmonies and contrasts of color, linear rhythms, patterns of light and shadow, harmonious spatial intervals, which we find in real objects only occasionally, or in a comparatively degraded form. These relationships, once pointed out, often appear with the force of a revelation: the actual appearance of things—not of pictures only, but also of the things of nature—assumes a colorfulness, a richness, an arresting interest, which make the world seem transfigured. But although the eye, once opened, sees the beauty of line, of color, of far-reaching space, in a whole world which was formerly drab and lifeless, it is in works of art that these qualities appear at their best. Always, or nearly always, in the realm of fact, the colors are imperfectly harmonious, the spaces are too empty or

else they are overcrowded, the lines are in some degree stiff and awkward. The desire for a satisfying order in things, in other words, is thwarted as often as it is satisfied, and the mind seeking to be thoroughly at home in the world must either turn to art, or else so select, simplify and rearrange its perceptions that they become in effect creative and aesthetic.

Just so, in our dealings with persons, we constantly find that actual people fall short in complete expressiveness, mar as well as make the living drama in which they play their part, and for the adequate satisfaction of our imagination we must project into them a set of qualities, of passionate attitudes, which our actual perceptions do not fully warrant; that or else turn to the personalities presented to us in literature.

The highest range of mysticism, the vision of the world as a manifestation of indwelling life or spirit, is best illustrated by Giotto, El Greco, Rembrandt or Claude Lorrain. In Giotto, mediaevalism reaches the summit of its pictorial expression. The profoundly religious quality of his pictures is not due to their employment of Christian subject-matter. Such subject-matter appears *ad nauseam* in the tedious and insipid altarpieces with which Catholic churches everywhere are filled. Upturned eyes, folded hands, a rapt and sanctified expression of face, only too often give the effect of mere sanctimoniousness, and the Biblical narratives which cover the walls of so many churches all over Europe are often no more mystical than the pictures in our own cinematograph theatres. It is the dignity, expressiveness and restraint of Giotto's line, the clear, luminous color in which his frescoes are bathed, the amplitude of his subtly indicated but convincing space, the whole effect of a transfigured but

deeply real world, which make us feel that the universe as he saw it is really more exalted, more glorified, than that which our own unaided eyes can show us.

In El Greco we have not the Olympian calm of Giotto, but tortured sensibility, a perfervid, almost feverish, imagination. Again, however, there is no reliance upon mere facial expression, upon literal imitation of terror, agony, transports. The ecstatic vision of El Greco appears in the use of the plastic means themselves, in the writhing serpentine line, the distorted figures, the iridescent, shimmering color, the eerie and ghastly light, the movement which flows through every area of the canvas. The whole world appears to be in a turmoil, a turmoil animated by hopes and fears akin to those of human beings, but otherworldly, unearthly, transported.

These painters represent what may be called a supernatural mysticism. We find the mysticism of Nature, at least of romantic Nature, in Claude; of human beings, in Rembrandt. Nature, in Claude, is of course not the Nature of mechanical science or of material things in their individuality. What Claude shows is the majestic peace of the larger groupings of natural objects, of meadow, river, mountain and sea. This he renders largely through designs of space, in which the use of perspective and the arrangement of the masses give us an overwhelming effect of extensivity, of infinity of distance. These vast spaces are filled with a glowing, colorful light, which makes them not merely indefinitely extended, but alive throughout the whole of their extension. From his pictures we get much the same effect that we do when, on a clear night, we not only see the stars but actually have some realization, however inadequate, of the magnitude of the stellar universe: the sense of a spaciousness by which our

minds and feelings are carried outward forever further and further.

The mysticism of Rembrandt is different from any of these. It is the realization of personality, a making manifest of the unplumbed depths of human quality which lie all about us, but which we are ordinarily too dull to realize for ourselves. There is not in him, as there is in Goya or Degas, an actual portrayal of psychological states of mind; there is neither irony nor sentiment; the persons portrayed are perfectly natural, composed, even—superficially—prosaic; but we have the impression that their flesh is opaque no longer, that we see through it to the living human being of whom it is only the visible sign. This mystery of personality is conveyed by the use of chiaroscuro, the dramatic contrast between light and shadow, by which the effect of an illumination of what seemed commonplace is perfectly realized.

Another example, again quite distinctive in kind, is that of Cézanne. Cézanne, living after Manet and Monet, had an interest in the apparently commonplace which resembles Rembrandt's; but the life he depicts is that of things as well as of persons, and his means are color, much more than light. He had Manet's ability to see the essential, that which makes a thing what it is; but the things are far more solid and substantial, they have a more moving reality, than Manet's. This sense of solidity and substance in individual things is conjoined with a much greater command of space-composition than Manet's, so that he gives us a sense of life in Nature which has much of the epic power of Claude, but is realistic rather than romantic. His mysticism becomes apparent the moment we compare his work with that of a not altogether dissimilar painter, Matisse, also a great artist, but one whose

work is much more superficial, much less powerful, much nearer mere decoration.

We must now consider the work of painters who aimed at mystical effects but failed to achieve them. Such painting is on the way to the ineffable raptures of the alcoholic, the drug-addict, the sentimentalist. Or—to take the familiar examples—it corresponds to the illumination provided by the word “Mesopotamia,” or by long-continued contemplation of the navel. Like all painting which descends from the plastic to the merely illustrative, it is characterized by reliance upon adventitious or conventional associations. We see an analogue to it in the patriotism which is merely flag-waving, or in the cheap fiction and balladry which rely on the stage-worn properties of romance—moonlit nights, weeping skies, sunsets over the sea. The painters who are spurious mystics, lacking the penetration of eye which can catch an independent view of the living world, and the command of means to set down such a view, copy, exaggerate and vulgarize the insight of others.

Mere subject-matter, as we have said with reference to Giotto, has nothing to do with the attainment of mystical effects. A Cézanne still-life communicates more of the quality of life, seems a profounder revelation, than a Madonna by Andrea del Sarto or Murillo. A painter such as Turner, however, relies almost solely upon the use of particular subject-matter. What is far away and long ago—for example, the scenes of classical mythology—what is strange and exotic, are utilized to replace any genuine perception of the true inwardness of things. In his “Wind, Rain and Speed,” we see a train crossing a bridge in the midst of a storm, and near by a group of fairies dancing! This is on a par with the mysticism of ghost stories. Meanwhile,



the technique, the actual use of plastic means, when it has any distinctive quality, is a superficial imitation of Claude's.

A similar counterfeit mysticism is that of Böcklin. His famous picture, "Die Toteninsel," might be an illustration for one of Edgar Allan Poe's tales. Of a fresh and personal perception of color, of light or of line, it shows none. It is not plastic art at all, but literature, and literature which is decidedly trite, melodramatic and specious. If this is mystical art, then so are the Doré illustrations to Dante's *Inferno*. The whole force of such painting is due to suggestions of things and events which have nothing whatever to do with painting: it has all the unreality of an opium dream. To take it seriously as art is the same thing as to make the sign of the cross in order to ward off smallpox infection.

A final illustration of such mysticism is the work of the American painter, Arthur B. Davies. In his pictures we see dreamy-looking nymphs in strange landscapes, swirling movement and flying hair which suggest the wind sweeping over wide open spaces—all the paraphernalia of popular romantic mysticism. But, as with Turner and Böcklin, this striking subject-matter is not embodied in a personal or distinctive plastic expression. His means are simply the clichés of painting, notably of Botticelli, employed to give pictorial setting to commonplace literary images. His vivid rhythmic movement is chiefly linear and is supported by no original use of color or light or space. Plastically, his painting is that of a skilled eclectic. His superficial adaptation of other men's contributions yields an appeal obvious but cheap, and his mysticism is only a dreamy dalliance with fancies.

## Art and Daydreaming<sup>1</sup>

By LAURENCE BUERMAYER

DAYDREAMS, like works of art, are a refuge for unsatisfied desires. Of the many things we want, we actually get but few; but in our reveries we have all that the heart can desire. To the eye of the beholder, our circumstances may seem shabby, our abilities commonplace and our persons unlovely. To our own, when resolutely fixed upon them, they may appear somewhat the same, though probably never quite so much so. But it is not often that our eye is resolutely fixed upon them. At the first opportunity it looks away from them in their ordinary form and seeks and finds a golden counterfeit. Then it is that beggars ride, that the humble sit in the seats of the mighty and that unrequited love exists no more. We no longer find in the past anything to blush for, nor anything to fear in the future.

Unfortunately, the change is unmade soon after it is made. Castles in Spain are delightful but not permanent. Even while they last they are never quite convincing, at least while we retain our sanity. Unless they possess some footing on the solid earth, their flimsiness is apparent to those who inhabit them. This footing, in the sense of actual reality, they cannot of course be given, but—to drop figurative expression—a certain amount of actual sensation will vivify a great deal of imagery, and that degree of contact with actu-

<sup>1</sup> From *The Aesthetic Experience* by Laurence Buermayer: Barnes Foundation Press.



ality is what much that passes for art is designed to provide. The country estate, the retinue of servants, the motor cars and yachts and throngs of admirers which our fancy cannot quite make real, become much more real if we read of them or see them on the stage or in the moving picture. A very large proportion of all paintings, the enormously greater part of fiction and drama and almost the whole of the "art of the screen" have no other purpose than to supply this body, this solidity, to daydreams. We live ourselves into the personages who are presented to us there, share their possessions and celebrate their triumphs. Hence the endowment of the hero and the heroine with all that is enviable, impressive and praiseworthy, hence the ignobility of all who oppose them, and hence the happy ending.

To see the relation of daydreaming to art we must go back to psychological fundamentals. We have seen that instinct or emotion, at every stage of development, expresses itself in envisaging, in terms appropriate to its own specific bent, the object that stimulates it. Such envisagement, when the emotion is guided by intelligence, is tentative: the admirable or contemptible traits with which the subject is invested remain in the hypothetical realm, and effort is made to find out how far they represent the truth. But for undisciplined emotion they are absolute, and, as when love is infatuation, no reconsideration of them is admissible. When emotion, instead of proceeding to its proper goal, loses itself in sloth or is paralyzed by the difficulty of making itself effective, its natural tendency to dwell in fancy upon its object absorbs all the energy which ought to go into action, and it dreams endlessly of the accomplishments which are beyond its power. There is no stage of enlightenment and discipline in the instinctive

life which is finally and completely adequate, able to meet all emergencies: the habitual expression of an emotion may always fail to do justice to a new situation. Therefore daydreaming may appear at every level of development. It may find expression in action no less than in thought, in refusing to see actual things as they are, as well as in flying for refuge to things wholly remote from reality. These alternatives correspond, respectively, to evasions of a problem in life, and evasion in imagination. We shall begin with consideration of the former.

Suppose, for example, that I wish to repair a break in a friendship. Someone to whom I am attached has given me what I take to be ground for complaint by accepting the offer of my services in a time of difficulty, and then disregarding my wishes in a matter in which his acceptance of my aid ought to have bound him to consider them. If he were going to act counter to them, he ought to have at least given some reason. In the absence of any explanation of his action, I feel that I have been used as a means to an end, and discarded when useful no longer. My former experience of him has made it difficult to believe that he is really mercenary and ungrateful, but until I can see the justification for his behavior, I cannot with self-respect continue on my former terms with him. One thing is sure: there has been an error somewhere.

It is needless, for the purposes of the illustration, to consider all possible alternatives: two will be sufficient. I may have estimated my supposed friend wrongly in the past, or the situation may not have seemed to him to involve on his part the obligations that I considered it to involve. Have I been unreasonable in my expectations, or was there something in my actions which exempted him from making the return which I regarded

as my due? If I am at all acquainted with human nature, I know that men, myself included, act from very mixed motives, that they find the difficulties of others not displeasing, since these give them the opportunity to enjoy their own security and power, and that it is very easy to make an enemy in doing a favor, if the favor is enjoyed as a means of gratifying one's own self-esteem at the expense of another's. To make sure that I have a grievance, I must be certain that my own motives were entirely disinterested, and that nothing in my manner could have been taken to indicate condescension, pleasure in my relatively advantageous rôle, or the impersonal benevolence of the professional altruist. In other words, I must overhaul my estimate both of my erstwhile friend and of myself, and try to see anew the incident from both points of view. If I succeed in solving the problem, I discover wherein I have been at fault, and wherein he has been at fault, the point at which we were at cross-purposes, the readjusted attitude and reformed habits required of both of us if relations are to be resumed. What the whole incident means is that the transformation of practice and feeling through the work of intelligence has broken down or at least been halted, and that effort is required for its renewal. I have failed in the art of life and must retrace my steps and seek fresh enlightenment.

In the discovery of traits and purposes previously overlooked in the person I supposed myself to know and in myself, there is the same increasing grasp of the real world, with corresponding clarification of my will and the means to its attainment, that we found to be everywhere the fruit of intelligence. The fruits of daydreaming are very different. The daydreamer refuses to meet his problems. In the instance just given, the problem cannot be solved without effort and at least

some degree of discomfort. No matter where the blame lay, I am revealed as inadequate in my judgment of others and of myself, and the painful necessity is laid upon me to learn to see and do differently. This necessity may be shirked in a variety of ways. I may elect to feel that those I care for should be forgiven even unto seventy times seven, and overlook the apparent inconsiderateness and ingratitude on my friend's part, supposing the while that my indolence, which forgets that justice must be rendered before generosity can be offered, is really magnanimity. Or I may feel that my friendship has been outraged and my dignity offered an affront, and in breaking off relations see in myself one who is above associating with the unworthy. In either case, whatever was amiss is unrectified, and I remain the self-righteous Pharisee who is guilty of the very disloyalty of which he complains. Whether sentimentality or vindictiveness carries the day, I remain unadjusted to reality, shut up in the world of my own preconceived ideas.

In the art which is really daydreaming, the same shirking of issues appears, with the same results. The painter who sees with a conventional eye, who makes of the original discoveries of other painters a mere set of devices for showing again what they have already shown, is evading the labor of looking upon Nature for himself. Of course he must be taught by his predecessors to see as much as they have seen, but he has no reason for existence unless he can sharpen the vision they have bequeathed him in order to see something more for himself. Otherwise he makes merchandise of stale sentiment and second-hand prettiness.

So also with the novelist or dramatist. The day-dreamer who seeks to produce literature is always he

who appeals to conventional sentiments, who puts before us the stock properties of the literary *mise-en-scène*. His situations, the purposes, sorrows and delights of his personages, are worn shapeless by long usage. The feelings to which they appeal are rigid as iron: they amount to what in psychology are called "fixations." Any wave of strong popular feeling provokes an outpouring of such printed daydreams, all melodramatic in essence, all, that is to say, invitations to the reader to take sides violently and be assured that whatever he is, is right. A nation at war furiously repudiates the idea that the enemy has anything good in him, and its prejudice is at once fed by a flood of novels and plays in which the angelic and diabolic rôles are fittingly assigned. Indeed, every sentiment widely diffused throughout society provides a market for works of a corresponding type, so that sentimental, patriotic and pornographic books need be written with only passable skill to be assured of at least some success.

A word which the years since 1914 have made increasingly familiar to all of us, is almost a perfect equivalent for daydreaming. Propaganda, though its motives may be different, has results wholly analogous to those of daydreaming. It is the art of putting only one side of a case, of concealing, slurring over, or belittling whatever contradicts what we want to believe or opposes what we want to do. It is the voice of crude instinct, howling down anything that could give it pause. Of course, to arrive at a conclusion and to try to persuade others that it is true, is not propaganda; the distinction between the two is that honest argument seeks to bring to light the objections to its thesis and to give them all the weight that is their due, while propaganda attempts to huddle objections out of sight.

Melodrama is to art what propaganda is to argument.

Among the more gifted and intelligent of contemporary purveyors of melodrama is Mr. Upton Sinclair.<sup>2</sup> His books are not necessarily to be condemned because they were written to illustrate a particular view of the world and its short-comings: so was the *Divine Comedy*. The ground of complaint against Mr. Sinclair is not that he has convictions, but that they spring from an experience which passionate partisanship has blinded to every aspect of the truth but one. It is possible to write of the hardships and oppressions to which labor is subject without making, as does Mr. Sinclair, the oppressed laborer a combination of all but the most flagrantly inappropriate virtues, and the victim, never of circumstances, but always of the heartless selfishness or malice of his exploiters. The question whether socialism is a desirable or practicable scheme of reform does not enter the question as here considered.

A writer with his eye on the facts, either of the abstract economic situation or of the situation as it appears to the laborer himself, would never write as does Mr. Sinclair. The hardships of the exploited may be as great as any propagandist would have us believe, but it is an offense against intellectual integrity to imply that they are those which, in the same position, a person of other nurture, habits and standards of life would be called upon to endure. Mr. Sinclair, to make the light of martyrdom in which he surrounds the laborer as vivid as possible, suggests or implies that absence of the daily bath, of opportunity to hear symphony concerts, of the sort of association with his fellows that would be craved by, let us say, a character

<sup>2</sup> These comments on Mr. Sinclair were in the main suggested to me by an unsigned article in the *Freeman*. I have not the date.

out of Henry James—that these things are a cruel deprivation to him. Correspondingly, we find slurred over the ignorance, lack of self-control, inability to understand general issues and to take an impartial and inclusive view of public affairs, which, far more than the malice of oppressors, stand between the proletariat and the more satisfactory way of life.

Mr. Sinclair thus falls short both as an ally of labor and as an artist seeking to depict an experience. The intelligent friend of labor, or the artist interested in the life of those who gain their bread by physical toil, would attempt to see exactly where the shoe really pinches, to discover what the individual of the submerged classes does desire and what resources he really has for getting it. In doing so, such a writer would strive, instead of covering up the short-comings of his protagonist, to bring them fully, though to be sure sympathetically, to light, since only so can they be understood and, from the practical point of view, corrected. The West Virginia miner who read *King Coal* would be encouraged by it, never to take pains to fit himself for the performance of the function which, well or ill, the capitalist and the promoter do perform, but to feel himself merely wronged and abused and unjustifiably kept down, to nurse a grievance and to indulge in self-pity. Mr. Sinclair has not achieved the portrayal of any human being, has conveyed no insight into any actual experience, but has provided a drug for those who wish without understanding to enjoy the pleasures of becoming indignant and lachrymose—either over themselves or over others.

Art and daydreaming are alike in that they both show us a world nearer to the heart's desire than the actual world. Otherwise they are antithetical. Art is



conduct and feeling enlightened by "fundamental brain-work" and finding the heart of their desire, entering by sympathy and imagination into the wider world of Nature and man. Daydreaming is conduct and feeling so dull or so feeble that they can only shrink into a private cell with painted walls.

# Affective Thought in Logic and Painting<sup>1</sup>

By JOHN DEWEY

TRADITIONAL theories in philosophy and psychology have accustomed us to sharp separations between physiological and organic processes on the one hand and the higher manifestations of culture in science and art on the other. The separations are summed up in the common division made between mind and body. These theories have also accustomed us to draw rigid separations between the logical, strictly intellectual, operations which terminate in science, the emotional and imaginative processes which dominate poetry, music and to a lesser degree the plastic arts, and the practical doings which rule our daily life and which result in industry, business and political affairs. In other words, thought, sentiment or affectivity and volition have been marked off from one another. The result of these divisions has been the creation of a large number of problems which in their technical aspect are the special concern of philosophy, but which come home to everyone in his actual life in the segregation of the activities he carries on, the departmentalizing of life, the pigeon-holing of interests. Between science's sake, art for art's sake, business as usual or business for money-making, the relegation of religion to Sundays and holidays, the turning over of politics to professional politicians, the professionalizing of sports, and so on, little

<sup>1</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, April, 1926.

room is left for living, for the sake of living, a full, rich and free life.

Recent advances in some fundamental generalizations regarding biological functions in general and those of the nervous system in particular have made possible a definite conception of continuous development from the lower functions to the higher. Interestingly enough, this breaking-down of fixed barriers between physiological operations and the far reaches of culture in science and art has also removed the underpinning from beneath the separation of science, art and practical activity from one another. There has long been vague talk about the unity of experience and mental life, to the effect that knowledge, feeling and volition are all manifestations of the same energies, etc.; but there has now been put in our hands the means by which this talk may be made definite and significant.

Naturally, the variety of physiological details involved has not yet been adequately organized nor has there been time to digest them and get their net results. In any case, the writer is not an expert in this field, and even if he were this would hardly be the place to expound them. But some of their net results are easy of comprehension, and they have a definite bearing upon art and its connection with the normal processes of life.

We may begin with the field of reasoning, long supposed to be preëmpted by pure intellect, and to be completely severed, save by accident, from affectivity and desire and from the motor organs and habits by which we make our necessary practical adjustments to the world about us. But a recent writer, Rignano, working from a biological basis, has summed up his conclusions as follows: "The analysis of reasoning, the highest of our mental faculties, has led us to the view that it is

constituted entirely by the reciprocal play of the two fundamental and primordial activities of our psyche, the intellectual and the affective. The first consist in simple mnemonic evocations of perceptions or images of the past; the second appear as tendencies or aspirations of our mind towards a certain end to be attained, towards which reasoning itself is directed.”<sup>2</sup>

An isolated quotation fails, of course, to bring out the full force of the points made. But what is summed up here under the idea of “affectivity” is that an organism has certain basic needs which cannot be supplied without activity which modifies the surroundings; that when the organism is in any way disturbed in its “equilibration” with its environment, its needs show themselves as restless, craving, desiring activity which persists until the acts thus induced have brought about a new integration of the organism and its relation to the environment. Then it is shown that thinking falls within the scope of this principle; reasoning is a phase of the generic function of bringing about a new relationship between organisms and the conditions of life, and like other phases of the function is controlled by need, desire and progressive satisfactions.

Rignano calls the other phase “intellectual.” But the context shows that the basic principle here is one of practical adjustments. Past experiences are retained so that they may be evoked and arranged when there is need to use them in attaining the new end set by the needs of our affective nature. But the retention is not intellectual. It is a matter of organic modifications, of change of disposition, attitude and habit. The “stuff” from which thinking draws its material in satisfying need by establishing a new relation to the surroundings is found in what, with some extension of the

<sup>2</sup> Rignano, *The Psychology of Reasoning*, p. 388.

usual sense of the word, may be termed habits: namely, the changes wrought in our ways of acting and undergoing by prior experiences. Thus the material of thought all comes from the past; but its purpose and direction is future, the development of a new environment as the condition of sustaining a new and more fully integrated self.

It thus turns out, though the argument is too technical to be developed on this occasion, that the great gap which is traditionally made between the lower physiological functions and the higher cultural ones, is due first to isolating the organism from the environment, failing to see the necessity of its integration with environment, and secondly, to neglect of the function of needs in creating ends, or consequences to be attained. So when "ends" are recognized at all, it has been thought necessary to call in some higher and independent power to account for them. But the connection of ends with affectivities, with cravings and desires, is deep-seated in the organism, and is constantly extended and refined through experience. Desire, interest, accomplishes what in the traditional theory a pure intellect was evoked to accomplish. More and more expansive desires and more varied and flexible habits build up more elaborate trains of thought and, finally, the harmonies, consistencies and comprehensive structures of logical systems result.

Reasoning and science are thus obviously brought nearer to art. The satisfaction of need requires that surroundings should be changed. In reasoning, this fact appears as the necessity for experimentation. In plastic art it is a common-place. Art also explicitly recognizes what it has taken so long to discover in science; the control of re-shaping natural conditions exercised by emotion, and the place of the imagination,

under the influence of desire, in re-creating the world into a more orderly place. When so-called nonrational factors are found to play a large part in the production of relations of consistency and order in logical systems, it is not surprising that they should operate in artistic structures. Indeed, it may be questioned whether any scientific systems extant, save perhaps those of mathematics, equal artistic structure in integrity, subtlety and scope, while the latter are evidently more readily and widely understood, and are the sources of a more widespread and direct satisfaction. These facts are explicable only when it is realized that scientific and artistic systems embody the same fundamental principles of the relationship of life to its surroundings, and that both satisfy the same fundamental needs. Probably a time will come when it will be universally recognized that the differences between coherent logical schemes and artistic structures in poetry, music and the plastics are technical and specialized, rather than deep-seated.

In the past we have had to depend mostly upon phrases to explain the production of artistic structures. They have been referred to genius or inspiration or the creative imagination. Contemporary appeal to the Unconscious and the Racial Unconscious are the same thing under a new name. Writing the word with a capital letter and putting "the" before it, as if it were a distinct force, gives us no more light than we had before. Yet unconscious activities are realities, and the newer biology is making it clear that such organic activities are just of the kind to re-shape natural objects in order to procure their adequate satisfaction, and that the re-shaped object will be marked by the features known to belong to works of art.

It is a common-place that repetition in place and

time, rhythm, symmetry, harmony, modulation, suspense and resolution, plot, climax and contrasting let-down, emphasis and intervals, action and retardation, unity, being "all of a piece," and inexhaustible variety, are marks, in varying ways, to meet the requirements of different media, of all artistic productions. These are just the traits which naturally characterize objects when the environment is made over in consonance with basic organic requirements. On the other hand, the fact that the spectator and auditor "clicks" so intimately and intensely in the face of works of art is accounted for. By their means there are released old, deep-seated habits or engrained organic "memories," yet these old habits are deployed in new ways, ways in which they are adapted to a more completely integrated world so that they themselves achieve a new integration. Hence the liberating, expansive power of art.

The same considerations explain the fact that works of art of a new style have to create their own audience. At first there is experienced largely the jar of dissonance with the superficial habits most readily called into play. But changes in the surroundings involve correlated changes in the organism, and so the eye and ear gradually become acclimatized. The organism is really made over, is reorganized in effecting an adequate perception of a work of art. Hence the proper effect of the latter is gradually realized, and then what was first condemned as *outré* falls into its serial place in the history of artistic achievement.

In *The Art in Painting*, Mr. Barnes has shown that plastic form is the *integration of all plastic means*. In the case of paintings, these are color, line, light and space. By means of their relations to one another, design is affected: design, namely in line patterns, in surface masses, in three-dimensional solids, and in



spatial intervals—the “room” about objects whether up and down, side to side, front and back. And Mr. Barnes has shown that it is the kind and degree of integration of plastic means in achieving each of the elements of design taken by itself and also the integration of each with all the others, which constitutes the objective standard for value in painting. From the psychological standpoint, this integration in pictures means that a correlative integration is effected in the total set of organic responses; eye-activities arouse allied muscular activities which in turn not merely harmonize with and support eye activities, but which in turn evoke further experiences of light and color, and so on. Moreover, as in every adequate union of sensory and motor actions, the background of visceral, circulatory, respiratory functions is also consonantly called into action. In other words, integration in the object permits and secures a corresponding integration in organic activities. Hence, the peculiar well-being and rest in excitation, vitality in peace, which is characteristic of aesthetic enjoyment.

Defective value can, of course, be judged by the same measure. Some one of the elements may be deficient; thereby adequate support is not given to the functioning of the other elements and a corresponding lack of vitality in response occurs or even a feeling of frustration and bafflement. Or, what is more likely to happen in pictures that may conventionally attain celebrity for a time, some factor is overaccentuated—so that while vision is captured and impressed for the moment, the final reaction is partial and one-sided, a fatiguing demand being made upon some organic activities which are not duly nourished and reinforced by the others.

Thus it is not too much to say that the statement of an objective criterion of value in paintings set forth

for the first time by Mr. Barnes will make possible in time an adequate psychological, even physiological, analysis of aesthetic responses in spectators, so that the appreciation of paintings will no longer be a matter of private, absolute tastes and *ipse dixits*.

By the use of the same conception of integration of specified means, Mr. Barnes has also for the first time given us the clue to the historical development of modern painting in terms of paintings themselves. In the earlier period, integration is in considerable measure achieved by means extraneous to the painting itself, such as associated subject-matter in the religious or prior (academic) tradition, or by undue reliance upon familiar associations between light and shade and spatial positions. The history of art shows a tendency to secure variety and relationship in plastic form by means of the element most truly distinctive of painting, namely, color. Lines, for example, have ceased to be hard and fast clear-cut divisions (in which case they are more or less nonintegrative), and are determined by subtle meetings of color-masses which upon close examination are found to melt into one another. Similarly, light and shade were long employed on the basis of everyday practical associations to give the impression of solidity. But artists capable of greater differentiation and integration of their experiences in terms of color itself experimented in conveying tri-dimensional relationships by means of variations and juxtapositions in color. Then color was employed to build up structural solidity and its variations in single objects. Painters have also learned to render action and movement, not by depending upon associations with extraneous experiences—which always lead to an overaccentuation of some one feature, light or line, as in depicting exaggerated muscular poses—but

by use of the relations of forms to one another, in connection with spatial intervals, this end being attained by use of color as means. The fact that this more subtle and complete integration usually involves deformation or distortion of familiar forms—that is, conflicts with associations formed outside the realm of painting—accounts for the fact that they are greeted at first with disdainful criticism. But in time a new line of organic associations is built up, formed on the basis of unalloyed aesthetic experiences, and deformations—what are such from the practical everyday standpoint—cease to give trouble and to be annoying. They become elements in a genuine and direct aesthetic grasp.

From the standpoint of the analysis of pictures, there is nothing new in these remarks to anyone familiar with Mr. Barnes's book. I have recurred to them only because the objective analysis of Mr. Barnes is in the first place so thoroughly in accord with the present trend of fundamental biological conceptions, and, secondly, because it makes possible an application of these biological conceptions to the whole field of artistic structures and aesthetic criticism. It then becomes possible to break down the traditional separation between scientific and intellectual systems and those of art, and also to further the application of the principle of integration to the relationship of those elements of culture which are so segregated in our present life—to science, art, in its variety of forms, industry and business, religion, sport and morals. And it is daily being more evident that unless some integration can be attained, the always increasing isolations and oppositions consequent upon the growth of specialization in all fields will in the end disrupt our civilization. That art and its intelligent appreciation as manifested espe-

cially in painting is itself an integrating experience is the constant implication of the work of the Barnes Foundation as that is reflected in *The Art in Painting*. For to make of paintings an educational means is to assert that the genuine intelligent realization of pictures is not only an integration of the specialized factors found in the paintings as such, but is such a deep and abiding experience of the nature of fully harmonized experience as sets a standard or forms a habit for all other experiences. In other words, paintings when taken out of their specialized niche are the basis of an educational experience which counteracts the disrupting tendencies of the hard-and-fast specializations, compartmental divisions and rigid segregations which so confuse and nullify our present life.

# Plastic Form<sup>1</sup>

BY ALBERT C. BARNES

THE word "plastic" is applied to something that can be bent or worked or changed into other forms than it has originally; and the things that a painter can work into various forms are line, color and space: these are the plastic means. A painting is a work of art only when the means at the painter's disposal are used in such a manner that an individual and distinctive conception of an experience, actual or imaginative, is conveyed to the spectator. It will show not a literal reproduction of an object but a definite idea embodying one or more human values. [It will be neither a literary nor a moral value, but a value which is communicated to us directly and without the intervention of any other agency than the specific ~~plastic~~ means—line, color, space.] Plastic form is the synthesis or fusion of these specific elements. To be significant, the form must embody the essence, the reality, of the situation as it is capable of being rendered in purely plastic terms. [A painter's worth is determined precisely by his ability to make the fusion of ~~plastic means~~ *plastic elements* forceful, individual, characteristic of his own personality.]

*Plastic* unity is form achieved by the harmonious merging of the ~~plastic~~ *plastic* elements into an ensemble which produces in us a genuinely satisfying aesthetic experience. ~~Plastic~~ *Plastic* form is significant, in the ultimate and

<sup>1</sup> From *The Art in Painting* by Albert C. Barnes: Harcourt, Brace and Co.

highest sense, only when it is a creation: an expression of an individual human experience in forceful plastic terms. *7 to 3* *visual*

The most obvious plastic element is color. It has an aesthetic value quite independent of its function of representing the surface color of real objects. Indeed, the aesthetic significance of color is the most difficult of all to judge and is the source of much confusion on the part of novices and even of advanced critics. The novice is subject to many pit-falls in this respect—the mere sensuous appeal of varying degrees of brilliance, individual preference for particular colors, unconscious comparison with well-known objects of definite color content—all these standards are far from the aesthetic criterion which alone fixes the real status of color as one of the plastic means. Its importance in painting is neither imitative, merely sensuous, nor even primarily that of surface decoration: its function is, chiefly, to organize the design.

Another of the primary plastic means is drawing—and here again reigns a confusion similar to that noted in connection with color. The novice looks for the type of drawing which is a replica of the way colored surfaces of real objects intersect to form line and contour. He forgets that the artist's work is not to copy literally the lines and contours of objects, but to so select, modify and accentuate them that there emerges a *creation*, constituting his individual version of the object. His success is a matter for aesthetic judgment and not for simple comparison with the original object.

In the flat surface of a painting, color and line make up all the objects depicted. If there were no attempt to indicate the fullness of spatial depth, if objects were placed as flat representations on a single plane, color and line would be the only plastic elements required.

*Plastic*

But such a painting would have no aesthetic significance unless there was an arrangement of the colored and drawn masses into some sort of relation with each other; and this arrangement is termed composition. ~~Even in the pattern of a carpet or wall paper, composition, in this sense of relations, is present.~~ To have an aesthetic appeal, the distribution of the elements in a pattern must have such a sequence of line and mass, a relation to each other, that they show an arrangement, an order, a balance which we find satisfactory to our sensibilities. ~~Thus,~~ mere pattern is the beginning of art expression in so far as it shows that the creator has chosen that particular arrangement in preference to others physically possible, but without as much aesthetic significance. In other words, color and line have been *composed* and the result is a design, a union of color and line to give a single aesthetic effect. Design is present when the color, the line, the composition, instead of being independently conceived, mutually affect one another and form a ~~new~~ unit. ] To alter any of these elements would disturb existing relationships and would destroy that particular unity. Consequently, if a design is completely satisfying aesthetically, it means that that particular arrangement of masses, that particular coloring, those particular shapes and sizes of objects, harmonize better with each other than would another series of relationships between the various components of the design. And this principle of unity may be said to be the ideal according to which all paintings may be judged. The design of a picture consists of the general plot or handling of the various details, and it is the factor which should be uppermost in the mind of the person who wishes to discriminate the plastically essential from the irrelevant. Design in plastic art is analogous to the thesis



of an argument, the plot of a novel, the general structure of a symphony, the "point" of a story: that is, the feature or detail which assigns to each of the other elements its rôle, its bearing, its significance.

A word of caution is necessitated by the present widespread confusion of pattern with design and with plastic form. Pattern, as defined in the previous paragraph, and in passages on Cubism (see Index, *The Art in Painting*), is always discernible in a good painting, but plastic form (page 73) is present only in a relatively degraded stage in the "abstract" painting represented by Cubism. Pattern is merely the skeleton upon which plastic units embodying the universal human values of experience are engrafted. Critics of the so-called advanced school prove by their writings that all that they see in paintings is mere pattern although they endow it with the oracular mystification of such terms as "plastic design" or "significant form." The needed clarification upon this point is furnished by Professor Dewey in the following statement: <sup>2</sup> "Unless the meaning of the term (significant form) is so isolated as to be wholly occult, it denotes a selection, for the sake of emphasis, purity, subtlety, of those forms which give consummatory significance to everyday subject-matters of experience. 'Forms' are not the peculiar property or creation of the aesthetic and artistic; they are characters in virtue of which anything meets the requirements of an enjoyable perception. 'Art' does not create the forms; it is their selection and organization in such ways as to enhance, prolong and purify the perceptual experience. . . . Tendency to composition in terms of the formal characters marks much contemporary art, in poetry, paint-

<sup>2</sup> From *Experience and Nature*. Open Court Publishing Co., Chicago. Professor Dewey's text has been slightly condensed.

ing, music, even sculpture and architecture. At their worst, these products are 'scientific' rather than artistic; technical exercises, sterile and of a new kind of pedantry. At their best, they assist in ushering in new modes of art and by education of the organs of perception in new modes of consummatory objects, they enlarge and enrich the world of human vision. But they do this, not by discarding altogether connection with the real world, but by a highly funded and generalized representation of the formal sources of ordinary emotional experience."

In all design, whether or not involving distortion, there are two important principles which deserve mention. These are rhythm and contrast. It is rhythm that first strikes our attention and produces the pleasure that holds us longest. No plastic element in a painting stands by itself, but is repeated, varied, counterbalanced by similar elements in other parts of the picture. It is this repetition, variation, and counterbalance that constitute rhythm. Each of the plastic elements may form rhythms with like elements—line with line, color with color, mass with mass—and each of these rhythms may enter into relation with the rhythms formed by other elements. The simplest form of rhythm is that in which the bending of a line is matched by similar modification in another line. This may be a simple repetition, or it may take the form of a meeting, intersection, and balance of lines in which duplication plays a small part, as in Poussin's "Arcadian Shepherds." Color may be likewise repeated, varied, balanced, in such a way that the rich, pervasive, powerful rhythm gives to the painting its chief characteristic, as in Giorgione's "Concert Champêtre" or in Renoir's "Bathers."<sup>3</sup> These rhythms, sup-

<sup>3</sup> The Barnes Foundation Collection.

plemented by rhythms of line, light and mass, permeate every part of the picture, contribute to the composition, and form an ensemble which constitutes design in its highest estate. Such fusion of rhythms, at its best, has an effect upon our sensibilities comparable to the harmonious merging of chords and melodies in a rich symphony in music.

As with rhythm, contrast may be of various sorts. Chiaroscuro, as Rembrandt used it, derives from the contrast of light and dark its powerful dramatic effect. In many Dutch landscape paintings, a placid episode is contrasted with dramatic trees and sky. A vivid contrast between foreground and background is to be found in Fra Filippo Lippi's "Virgin Adoring the Child": the Virgin and Child are disproportionately larger than the figures and masses behind them, and much lighter in color. In this case, the fact that the background has the effect of a screen greatly heightens the general contrast. The power of Giotto's earlier compositions is largely due to his success in unifying the two sides of his pictures even when the contrast between them is so striking that they seem radically disparate.

Matisse is an example of very successful color-contrast. Or the contrast may be between different sorts of technique: broad areas of color may appear in one part of the picture, divided colors in another. This sometimes appears in van Gogh, who also diversified his effects through contrasting direction and size of the brush-strokes. The principle of all contrast is that of combining variety with unity, but it advances beyond the general principle in emphasizing the fact that variety is effective in proportion as the difference between the elements involved is unmistakable and dramatic.

To the experienced observer of paintings, it is the design that is revealed at first glance, and determines whether or not the painting is worthy of further attention. The study of a painting consists in nothing more than the determination of how successfully the artist has integrated the plastic means to create a form which is powerful and expressive of his personality. Defects in plastic form are revealed by ineffective use of line, color poor in quality or inharmonious in relations, inadequate feeling for space, stereotyped, formulated or perfunctory use of means, overemphasis of one or more of the plastic elements. In short, plastic form is lacking when the halting, inadequate, unskilled use of the means fails to effect that unity which is indispensable in a successful work of art. Either the artist has nothing to say or he lacks the command of means to convey an idea in plastic terms.

Painting which makes no attempt to portray spatial depth, that is, the third dimension, represents plastic form at its simplest. It may embody fluid graceful line, harmonious color, flat masses and surface space, all so composed that the relations establish plastic form of a high order, even though quite simple. It is true that scarcely any painting is absolutely flat, even that of the Byzantines or Persians: there is usually some indication that the different parts of the painting are not literally on one plane, as are the figures in a rug. The objects almost invariably appear to be at varying distances from the spectator's eye, though this effect may be achieved in ways other than by the utilization of perspective or deep space. In many Persian miniatures, for example, the depiction of different scenes will be upon the same plane, the scenes placed one above the other; thus a substitute for perspective is achieved. While the design in flat painting may be

satisfying, such plastic forms remain comparatively meagre and correspondingly deficient in reality.

In general, if there were no depth, there could be no solidity, no rendering of planes one behind the other, as they exist in the world as we know it. It is obvious that to render the depth and solidity of objects, the illusion of deep space must be created by plastic means. In flat painting, in which objects can have only two dimensions, they can have no depth, cast no shadows, cannot bulge or recede, and cannot be felt to be solid. Color remains superficial, sequence of line is chiefly mere pattern, light is divorced from pattern and can play no rôle except to modify the quality of color, and composition is reduced to arrangement of objects above and below, to right and to left. But when deep space is conceived, color, line, composition and design are endowed with new possibilities of individual and inter-related treatment, which increase greatly the painter's power to create new and more complex plastic forms that move us by a multitude of realities not possible in merely flat painting.

Plastic form and reality go hand in hand—that is, an attenuation of means results in a form which leaves out of account much of the actual quality of things which in art, as in the real world, moves us so deeply. When a painter uses any of the plastic means inadequately, the fullness, the richness of his work, suffers to the extent of his lapse, for it is a characteristic of good art that it gives a reality more convincing, more penetrating, more satisfying than actual objects or situations themselves give.

While it is true that painting which portrays spatial depth is, in general, richer in plastic values than painting which approaches flatness, it is *not* true that mere depth or solidity of objects is the factor which deter-

mines the relative worth of such paintings. It is possible to get an effect of depth and solidity by tricks of perspective or modeling, in which event the third dimension becomes mere virtuosity; instead of reality we get a specious unreality, more unreal than a frank two-dimensional pattern. Spatial depth and solidity of objects have aesthetic value only when they are achieved by plastic means harmoniously coördinated with the other plastic elements; that is, when they function as elements in a unified design. Therefore, it is obviously absurd to judge the relative merits of two painters upon the success with which they render the illusion of a solid figure extending into deep space. For example, a figure by Renoir has not, generally, the solidity of a figure by Cézanne; such a figure would not enter harmoniously into the plastic form, the lighter, more delicate general design of the Renoir; Cézanne's design conveys the effect of austerity and power, and anything but a solid figure would be a disturbing factor. In short, spatial depth and solidity are not to be judged by any absolute standard but only by their contribution to a unified plastic form.

The merits of relatively flat painting and of three-dimensional painting which realizes solidity and spatial depth can be compared only when we observe how the artist has used color and light. One often sees paintings where color is merely laid on the surface like a cosmetic; it has the quality of tinsel, of something added after the object has been constructed. Instead of increased reality we get an effect of falsity, of unreality, and the painting lacks organic unity. Color is usually not a property merely of the surface of objects as we perceive them in the real world. The gray of a stone seems to spring from its depth, to go down to the body of the stone; we see it as a solid object and as



a gray object; the color is perceived as part of the structure of the stone, not as something laid on. In painting, the failure to include color in form reduces the degree of conviction carried by form, and makes the total effect relatively cheap, tawdry, unreal.

Not less important than color, in attaining a convincing and real three-dimensional character, is the use of light and shadow. In painting that is two-dimensional, light functions through modification of hue or tint so that the shade of a color is partly determined by the light that falls upon it. In three-dimensional representation, solidity of an object is achieved by having the most light fall upon the point nearest to the source, from which there is a continuous gradation to deepest shadow. The swells and hollows are portrayed by means of the rise and fall of illumination. In other words, solidity is rendered by color and light correlated, and that correlation constitutes the modeling of forms. But it is obvious that this correlation makes possible another aesthetic effect: such use of color and light that they may each form independent and separate rhythmic patterns which in turn form rhythms with the other plastic elements. For example, in Bellini's "Allegory of Purgatory" the pattern made up of the light and shadow placed in various parts of the canvas, is one of the principal components of the plastic form: it is totally independent of the function of the light and shadow in giving indications of position and contour. Similarly, in Titian's "Man with the Glove," the pattern formed by the light used to render the solidity of various parts of the head and hands, does much to organize the picture. In general terms, the artist has used a particular plastic means to portray the essence, the reality, of the subject and also to enrich and vivify as well as unify the design.



The plastic element which determines the character of three-dimensional painting is deep space and this is achieved by the use of perspective. It need not be literal perspective as we perceive it in the real world: it must be used plastically, that is, changed or adapted by the artist to particular needs. Perspective conjoined with the modeling makes possible what is termed "space composition." This is something over and above the third dimension achieved by the utilization of line, color, light and perspective to make an object appear solid. It is different from "composition," as that word is ordinarily employed to describe the arrangement or distribution of masses in a painting. Space-composition is such an arrangement of things in the depth of space that the intervals, back and forward as well as up and down and to right and left, are felt to have a pleasing relation to each other. We feel the intervals not primarily as three-dimensional qualities, as we do in perceiving solid objects, but as the space itself which surrounds those objects. Space-composition moves us aesthetically when each object is so placed in its particular position that we perceive the space around the object in a definite relation to the space around each of the other objects, and that all these spaces are unified, that is, composed. If there were no objects there could be no space between them; hence space-composition involves both the objects *and* the intervals of space. It is the sequence of objects and spaces so ordered that they form a pattern which we perceive as a thing in itself. Space-composition is successful when it enters into relation with the other plastic elements to give a plastic form which functions as a unified whole; in other words, when the painter has been so successful in suggesting planes receding, advancing and interacting with each other, that the

whole series of spatial intervals between objects, as well as the objects themselves, interests or charms us. Space-composition contributes enormously to the reality of total effect, since in our commerce with the real world we not only see objects but move among them. We live in a world of space and we see objects in relation to remoter objects: a tree with a wall beyond it, a house against a background of hill or forest. Our mind is filled with these forms. When an artist enriches them with his deeper perceptions and feelings, and moulds them into designs richer than our unaided powers could construct, we share his larger vision and deeper emotions.

We have seen that plastic form is satisfactory when there exists an integration, a balance of its factors, that is, when they unify. As one progresses in the study of plastic art, a great variety of falls from plastic unity reveal themselves. A painter, unable to enter fully into his subject, to see it in its concrete fullness and with an eye to all its relations, or one with an insufficient command over all the plastic means, produces but an inadequate substitute for a unified painting. He may single out for emphasis some one feature and slight the others, treating them sketchily, perfunctorily or conventionally. When this happens, we have what is termed formula painting, or academicism, and while often the parts treated are done very skillfully, the skill is mere virtuosity: the painter, no matter how adroit, is not genuinely an artist. Line, or light, or modeling, or perspective, or the relations with surrounding objects that enter into space-composition—any one of these may be accentuated to the point of submerging the other aspects of the object or situation. When this occurs proper integration of the various

plastic means is not achieved and the result is comparative unreality.

Intelligence guides us to reject as uninteresting what we find unreal: we cannot accept as real what we feel does not represent an object or situation in all its aspects, *in its concrete fullness*. This principle, so true in real life, is equally true in all the forms of art. For example, in poetry, Swinburne's spontaneity, variety and subtlety of rhythm produce an exceedingly brilliant effect. But the flow and surge of his verse is soon seen to conceal an inner emptiness; mere rhythm is made to serve for the imaginative grasp of the subject that should vary both the ideas and their expression by all the poetic means. This constant repetition of rhythm without other poetic content becomes mere virtuosity. Verbal magic destitute of meaning constitutes unreality. In music, Berlioz and Liszt have a great command of orchestration, but their themes are almost invariably commonplace and conventional, their ideas are thin, and the orchestral dressing fails to conceal the essential triviality. Here again one factor is given an exaggerated rôle to cover up a lack of real substance, and the effect is one of showiness or melodrama, of unreality.

The conception of plastic form, as integration of all the plastic means, will be used in this book as the standard and criterion of value in painting, and hence all the analyses and judgments that follow will be an illustration of its meaning. To clarify what is meant by integration of plastic means we may anticipate the later discussion and consider Raphael as a striking example of inadequate plastic form. Raphael has often been looked upon as one of the greatest of all painters. He was undoubtedly a master of his medium and possessed

extraordinary ability to put down what he had in mind. He had a great command over line, his ability to use light to indicate contour and to make a pattern was of a high order, and in space-composition his gifts were unsurpassed. But these accomplishments were largely borrowed, his line and light from Leonardo, his space-composition from Perugino. His color is superficial and undistinguished in quality; it is thin, dull, sometimes garish, and it seems rather an after-thought in the design. His composition is almost invariably conventional; it has not the freshness and the inevitable fitness that we see, for example, in Giotto, so that for all the spaciousness and airiness of his pictures we never get the impression of a really original and powerful imagination at work. His borrowings he has made in some measure his own; but they are not sufficiently changed to indicate that they are really a creation of a strong personality and a distinct mind. His subject-matter lacks originality and is generally so sweet and soft that one feels that he saw things sentimentally and that they produced in him commonplace and rather trivial emotions. In other words, he had no vigorous personality to serve as the crucible in which the qualities of things should be fused and welded into a new form. The result is that his particular means remained disjoined from his conceptions as a whole, and his light, line, and space-composition stand out as isolated devices, as exploits of virtuosity. He did achieve a form of his own, and his great technical skill enabled him to attain marvellous results, but the efforts are often specious and the effects tawdry.

For examples of the use of plastic means so disintegrated as to be mere tricks or mechanical stunts, we may examine the picture by Guido Reni entitled "Dejancira." We find almost nothing expressive of

the painter's individual grasp of the subject, and correspondingly there is no real synthesis of the plastic means employed. The pattern and composition are effective, but these are taken directly from Raphael and executed less competently. The impression of movement is rendered skillfully, but it is so much overdone that it suggests histrionics rather than art. The color is without charm or originality, and is simply laid upon the surface. It is so little integrated in the plastic form that another set of colors might be substituted with no damage to the total effect of the picture. What we have is a mere assemblage of devices without inner coherence and contributing to an effect that is conventional, strained, and exceedingly tawdry.

The recognition of the balance or integration of plastic means which constitutes plastic form comes only from experience in looking at many kinds of painting. There can be no rules by which we can fix a degree to which variety and brilliance of color, elaboration of grouping, rhythm of line, etc., must be present, and then say that if any of these factors fall below such a point, there is overemphasis on the other factors. Colorists such as Rubens and Renoir cannot be accused of overaccentuation of color because they realized other aspects of the world in plastic terms equally strong, so that it is clear that they did not conceive *exclusively* in terms of color. In the work of both of these painters we see significant line, movement, composition, effective spacing, both on the surface and in the third dimension. Color serves not as the only source of effect, but as an organizing principle. Renoir's drawing, for example, is done in terms of color, and though the incisive line characteristic of Raphael or Leonardo is absent, the effects to which line contributes—movement, fluidity and rhythm—are

rendered with great success. Although the kind and degree of solidity which we find in Leonardo, Michel Angelo or Cézanne is absent in Renoir's figures, they do not seem vaporous or unreal. They have substance, mass, actuality, though not in the same manner and degree as do the figures in the work of painters whose primary purpose was different.

The way in which emphasis of one of the plastic means may be united with subsidiary but sufficient realization of the others is further illustrated in Rembrandt. He employed chiaroscuro, that is, a bright area surrounded by darkness: light surrounded by heavy shadow serves as the point of departure in most of his pictures. He avoids overemphasis of his special means by making the tones in connection with light function as color more powerfully than any colors of Leonardo or Raphael. In the portrait of "Hendrickje Stoffels" (in the Louvre) and in that of "The Old Man" (in the Uffizi), minute variations in the golden-brown light give a richer, more glowing and actually more varied effect than all the colors of the spectrum used by a lesser artist. When, as in the "Unmerciful Servant," Rembrandt introduces bright color the effect is one of marvellous depth, richness and fire. This same combination of economy of means and great effectiveness is to be found also in his line and composition. In space-composition, for example, the use of chiaroscuro narrowly circumscribes the space at the painter's disposal, yet in the "Unmerciful Servant" the effect of roominess achieved is comparable to the fine spatial effects of Perugino or Poussin.

In general terms we may say that in painting, as in all other forms of art, whatever quality is selected as setting the dominant note must be ballasted and made real by being shown in a context of other qualities, and



when this is not done the effect becomes conventional, cheap, tawdry, unconvincing, and unreal.

The "reality" which we consider to be the essence of art-value in painting may be illustrated by reference to the subject-matter portrayed by the French painters, David and Delacroix. In David, there is constant recourse to stage-settings, poses, themes, reminiscent of classic antiquity. In Delacroix's exotic, Byronic themes, there is a similar indication that the world in which we actually live is beneath the artist's serious attention. In both cases we are conscious of an artificial or theatrical quality, and this conviction that the painters are playing a game or acting a part is not affected by the fact that the histrionics were doubtless free from deliberate insincerity. What they portray of poignancy, pathos, tragedy, significance, existed in the world about them. If they did not find them there, we are justified in concluding that they did not know what they are, and that their portrayal of them is essentially a caricature, a set of figments out of day-dreams.

This condemnation of "classicism" or "romanticism" is not based upon literary considerations, but upon plastic ones: antiquarianism or sentimentalism betrays itself in limited and unoriginal command of plastic means. The painter does not really draw inspiration for his art out of his own personal experience but depends upon other painters for the methods by which his pictorial effects are produced. David's "classic" calm, or rather coldness, is due to a line which he took from Raphael and Mantegna and they took it from ancient sculpture. It is not something which the artist actually saw as a part of a personal and coherent view of real things, but a studio-device to which the qualities of color, mass, and space were added as an after-



thought. These qualities do not really fuse with the line to produce an impression of reality, but remain adventitious, just as the "noble" or "distinguished" figures and situations painted remain strangers and phantoms in the world in which we actually live.

The same is true of Delacroix. The stormy emotion, the exaggerated gesture and violent drama, are almost as spectrally unreal as David's "nobility," and they mean the same inability to *see* the actual world about him. Delacroix does not seem so artificial either in subject-matter or in plastic quality as David, because romanticism was for him less a pose than classicism was for his predecessor, and because he did more to modify and reorganize what he took from others. His color represents an advance over Constable's or Rubens's in that he showed a degree of originality in the methods he took from them. Consequently, he seems more real, and so more interesting and a greater artist, than David.

We realize how essentially fantastic David and Delacroix were when we compare them with later painters. The concern with actually existing scenes, persons, and situations made of Courbet and his successors the legitimate successors of Velasquez and Goya, in making us see the objective qualities of things, divested of the subjectivism that constituted the romanticists' exhibited world of self. To sympathy with Courbet's insight we owe the great painters of 1870—Manet, Monet, Degas, Sisley, Pissarro, Renoir, Cézanne—and the imaginative telling of the story of life in a real world. Of that group, Renoir and Cézanne deal most objectively with the whole range of experience as men find it verified in themselves, free from the trifling, the insignificant, the preoccupation with theory, method, virtuosity, or personal vanity.

If one looks beneath the dissimilarity of techniques, Renoir and Cézanne are seen as close kin in dealing with the fundamental, universal attributes of people and things. Both treated the familiar, everyday events that make up our lives. We see, feel, touch the particular quality that gives an object its individual identity. Each of the painters created a world richer, fuller, more meaningful than that revealed to our own unaided perceptions. Each mirrors a world we know by having lived in it, so vividly that we get a sense of going through an actual experience. Both are great artists because they make art and life one by convincing us of the truth and reality of what they see and feel and express.

# Pattern and Plastic Form <sup>1</sup>

By LAURENCE BUERMAYER

IN Mr. Clive Bell's book, *Art*, published in 1914, is expressed a conviction and a standard widely influential in contemporary art-criticism. The burden of Mr. Bell's contention, that the distinguishing excellence of a work of art has nothing to do with its subject-matter but that it depends on what he calls "significant form," an independent and specifically aesthetic relation between the elements of the work of art, is not original with him. It is clearly foreshadowed in Pater's assertion that art at all times strives towards the condition of music, in which the appeal to emotion is made without any recourse to images of real things. For this view Pater himself never claimed any essential originality: he regarded it as a simple generalization from the work of the school of Giorgione. So far as the effect of Mr. Bell's book was limited to driving home to the popular consciousness the truth that a picture is not good because it resembles its original, points a moral or tells an entertaining story, he was to be commended for a real service to the cause of education. The same thing may be said of his work of undermining the saccharine tradition which goes back to Raphael. Since the views against which he contended were overwhelmingly dominant in the popular consciousness, his book undoubtedly exercised a beneficial influence in many quarters.

Unfortunately, however, he did not content himself

<sup>1</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, January, 1926.

with exposing the more flagrant errors of popular aesthetics, but offered an aesthetic theory of his own, as far removed from the truth as were the views which he attacked. Starting with the premise, unexceptionable in itself however little original, that a picture is not necessarily good because it mirrors accurately some real thing, he draws the conclusion, which does not in the least follow, that the goodness of a picture is totally and absolutely independent of its relation to any real thing. The only alternatives which he contemplates, in other words, are slavish imitation and wholly abstract or non-representative art. It is the contention of the present paper that this sharp distinction leads to a reduction of "significant form" to what may better be termed "pattern," that it makes decorative design as we find that in rugs or in wall-paper the ideal of all plastic art, and that "significant form," as Mr. Bell understands the word, would more accurately be described as "insignificant" or "meaningless" form.

A picture, Mr. Bell says, is good if it possesses "significant form." We should naturally expect such a statement to be followed by a definition of this all-important quality. No such definition is ever even attempted. Instead we are told that "significant form" is such an arrangement of the elements in any work of art as is productive of aesthetic emotion. When we ask what aesthetic emotion is (a necessary question, since according to Mr. Bell most of what passes for aesthetic emotion is mere sentiment), the answer is that it is the emotion which is produced by significant form! Of course, nothing is ever fully definable in terms of anything else; definition in the end resolves itself into mere pointing, an indication of some immediate experience which must be had or felt if the defini-

tion is to be intelligible; but it is generally regarded as the mark of intelligence, and certainly of scientific analysis, to defer this recourse to the merely immediate as long as possible. However impossible it may be to find words for ultimate realities, we are entitled to expect that relations, the things with which what is defined has affinities, be pointed out. We find nothing of the sort in Mr. Bell, so that "significant form" remains wholly esoteric and recondite. The lady who by her reiteration of the only too familiar refrain, "I don't know anything about art, but I know what I like," earned Whistler's retort, "A quality, madam, which we share with the lower animals," seems to have differed in this respect from Mr. Bell only by her superior modesty. Mr. Bell, it appears, knows what he likes and calls that and only that art.

Admitting the value of Mr. Bell's castigation of popular errors, it is indeed a question whether the good his book has accomplished among the aesthetically illiterate is not more than counterbalanced by the harm it has done among the discriminating. It is important that the specific which characterizes a work of art and distinguishes it from a mere report of objective fact should be recognized and valued. This form, as it appears in painting, is perhaps better termed "plastic form" than "significant form"; it does furnish the criterion of properly aesthetic quality; but the manner of Mr. Bell's advocacy of it, the obscurity in which he has shrouded it and the Olympian assurance with which he dogmatizes about it, have seriously compromised its recognition. Oracular mystification where clear definition is the first requisite, and display of unbounded certitude in the early stages of analysis, where everything ought to be tentative and hypothetical, are perfectly adapted to compromise any cause.

The source of Mr. Bell's vagueness is not far to seek. It is due to the absolute divorce between form and subject-matter, to the repudiation not only of copying, but of every type or degree of interpretation. In opposition to Mr. Bell, we shall seek to show that plastic form is only relatively independent of subject-matter, and that while subject-matter does not in any degree prescribe the detail of an artist's work, it does furnish the point of departure and relatively, at least, fix the conditions of success. When the clue which it offers is entirely discarded, when truth, imaginative or interpretative as well as literal, is utterly banished from art, the artist is reduced to playing with sensations, to devising patterns which have, to be sure, many elements of aesthetic appeal, but which are far from sufficient for great art.

We shall attempt to show this in detail by examples of the sort of criticism to which pure abstractionism leads. The general criticism, however, may be illustrated in music and literature as well as in painting. To condemn program-music, the bleating of the sheep and blowing of the wind in Strauss's "*Don Quixote*," is one thing; to say that the best music is the most "pure," the most destitute of any expression of human emotion, is a very different thing: it is to exalt Haydn above Beethoven. Similarly with literature. It is often said that aesthetically style counts and ideas do not count, and as evidence the case of Dante or of Milton is cited. The belief of these men in what Santayana calls the Christian epic now finds little echo in most cultivated readers, but the value of their style, the greatness of their literary stature, no one denies. To say, however, that their ideas, the content of their poetry, are dead, is to forget how much of their work goes beyond any mere scheme of supernatural salva-

tion, how much of it expresses human feeling and aspiration as they appear in realms wholly non-theological. To say that, because any particular idea becomes obsolete eventually, the permanent value of poetry can be achieved by someone who has no ideas but is concerned to make a deft arrangement of words, is utterly false, and it is the precise analogue of the view that great painting springs not from any vision of the *world*, but from a fondness for making decorative upholstery.

The view of which Mr. Bell has been taken as the representative is thus the view, already combated in this book,<sup>2</sup> that art is an affair of the museum, a separate compartment in life into which we can enter only by turning our back upon the rest of life. It is not necessary to debate further this persuasion or prejudice in its general form; it may be useful, however, to point out the difference made by it in the practical procedure of education. If the view is true, then training in art, either in the appreciation or the execution of works of art, is a training in special tricks of the trade, devices or rules by which good patterns may be made and distinguished from bad. Specimens of such tricks, examples of such rules, are what we find in picture-galleries, to which accordingly the potential artist or connoisseur is directed to go for the acquisition of something as essentially abstract and specialized as skill in playing chess.

The opposed view, here defended, is that what the picture-gallery offers is of course valuable, but that it is valuable as the means of seeing, through the paint and canvas, the objective world. Not, of course, the world as a mere matter of physics or chemistry or impersonal sensation, but the world seen by the individual

<sup>2</sup> See *Art and the Ivory Tower* by Laurence Buermeyer, p. 32.



painter. The reply of Renoir to the questioner who asked him where one learned to paint, "Au musée, parbleu!" may be interpreted to mean what the pattern-makers mean, or—a very different matter—that it is through the vision of others that the painter sharpens his own. Which interpretation is to be chosen, Renoir's own practice makes abundantly clear. No modern painter, assuredly, combined a greater store of illumination derived from the traditions of the past with a fresher eye for the life about him, the unhackneyed, unstereotyped *things* of the contemporary scene. Our contention, in brief, is that the primary purpose of education in art is refinement and enrichment of the act of seeing, and that the plastic form which is not an expression of such seeing is trite, superficial or merely decorative.

Mr. Bell is to a large extent responsible for the prevalent confusion between pattern and plastic form, between merely decorative arrangement of line, color and mass, and the organization of those elements by which a convincing reality ("convincing," not "photographic") of an artist's experience with an objective world is achieved. Imitating Mr. Bell's objectionable mystification and dogmatism and throwing to the winds nearly every principle of psychology and logic, a host of writers have added other absurdities, in efforts to prove that art is something essentially separate from everyday experience. They thus lose the clue afforded by imaginative interpretation of the reality of things and fill in the resulting vacuum with elaborate definitions of pattern that extend from deification of platitudes, such as "significant form," all the way to mechanical formulas which are alleged to have a mathematical foundation and are baptized by the meaningless catchword "dynamic symmetry." Each of these con-

coctions is guaranteed to contain the secret of all great art. One of them offers a set or table of the elements of design, comparable to the table of chemical elements, and gives directions for combining them into satisfactory forms, thus reducing all "design" to an arrangement of lines and areas in two dimensions. Not a suspicion, apparently, occurs that all such elements and relations are wholly relative to the particular purpose of the painter, to the aspect of reality of which he is giving his personal version, or that in great art the rules laid down are as often broken as they are obeyed. Rules of this sort are useful to anyone who has nothing of his own to say and who wishes to learn to repeat what someone else has already said. They are useful to the real artist or student in precisely the same way that crutches are useful to the athlete.

What lends plausibility to the confusion of plastic form with pattern is the fact that a pattern, a decorative arrangement of superficial qualities, is usually if not always to be found in works of art. Decoration, in other words, is a quality of painting, and a valuable quality, if it is not made the be-all and end-all of art. The mathematical formulation of pattern, with its attendant rigidity, is not essential to the reduction of plastic form to pattern, so that the case for pattern is really stronger than many of its advocates make it out to be. Decorative arrangement of line and mass, however, at its best falls far short of the aesthetic richness of truly expressive plastic form, and some illustration of this fact must be given if the true relation of the two is to be made apparent.

In every great painter the presence of pattern can easily be demonstrated by an analysis of his pictures. In Giotto, for example, the rhythm and sequence of line, distribution of masses, and contrast and harmony

of color, have an immediate and obvious decorative effect, but the expression proper (not of course merely facial expression but imaginative insight) goes far beyond decoration. It resides in the restraint and dignity with which the figures are conceived, in the mystical quality conveyed largely by a pervasive, transfiguring color-glow and by a convincing spaciousness, attained by few and, in themselves, rather schematic indications of perspective. These things enter also into the pattern, but it is in their service in revealing a world which only Giotto was capable of seeing that their most moving aesthetic effect resides. This is true also of El Greco, whose mystical world is revealed no less convincingly than is Giotto's, different as is its fervidness from the serenity of Giotto.

For other examples we may take Rembrandt and Manet. In both, of course, the pattern is present. In Rembrandt it is formed largely by gradations of light, contrasts of light and shadow, by which colors usually dull in themselves are made to glow and display an extraordinary richness, and by which masses scarcely defined by linear contour are given body and reality, and are organized in space. The pattern in Rembrandt, however, is much less clear-cut, rhythmic and decorative than, for example, in Botticelli. Rembrandt's enormous superiority over Botticelli is due to something quite apart from pattern; it is due to his ability to make the play of light over flesh seem to illuminate the depths of personality, set forth the living human being who is portrayed. This is done by no mere emphasis of the ordinary signs of emotion, the facial gestures indicating pain, hope, sorrow or compassion, all of which depend upon more or less casual associations of ideas. It is truly plastic, and yet much more than decorative. It contains what plastic form

always, and decoration never, achieves: a grasp of the essential nature of a thing, the unique quality which makes the thing what it is, which is shared with nothing else in the world. Rembrandt's painting of human hair, for example, is much slighter as decoration than Botticelli's; certainly it is equally far from photographic literalism; but it is infinitely more moving, because it gives us, as Botticelli's does not, an essential reality and not a superficial embellishment.

In Manet this reality is primarily achieved by the use of broad brush-strokes which, omitting irrelevant detail, yet give the natural, essential quality of things in their familiar matter-of-fact aspects. Different as these aspects are from those which engaged the attention of Giotto, El Greco, or Rembrandt, they are equally essential and distinctive. The critic whose eyes are closed to everything but pattern can see in these brush-strokes merely the elements in a particular type of decoration. This decorative aspect is indubitably there, it is an important part of the total effect, but to attach exclusive importance to it is as grave an error as to consider only the illustrative aspect of Manet's work.<sup>3</sup>

Critics of the "advanced school" may be expected to reply to the foregoing contentions that they revert to the popular literary standard of plastic criticism. The difference between plastic form, as here conceived, and merely literary form must be pointed out. If in Giotto or El Greco the effect, as above expounded, depended upon identification of the persons portrayed as Jesus, the Virgin, or the other figures of the Christian hierarchy, the charge would be justified. There would

<sup>3</sup> For more detailed analysis of the work of Giotto, El Greco, Rembrandt, and Manet, see *The Art in Painting* by Albert C. Barnes; Harcourt, Brace and Co.

then be reliance upon what we know *about* the things shown, and not upon what we actually see upon the canvas. The things would be labels, not realities. But in all the painters in question the illustration is given in good plastic terms. We see and feel the reality as the painter saw and felt it, and we need no extraneous associations to eke out what is actually presented. What is characteristic of merely literary painting is that the image set before us is trite and meaningless in itself, and that it derives its interest from the part played by the thing represented in practical life. In true plastic form, what is represented is significant not as an arbitrary symbol but as something of which the meaning is felt immediately, as an integral part of the actual image.

The interpretation of plastic form as pattern involves a denial to the painter of all effects that involve more than mere sensation. According to it, the funded results of past experience can never be more than adventitious associations, irrelevant to pictorial design. It is evident that the ejection of the meanings upon which human values depend, on the ground that they are inferred and not actually perceived, cannot stop short of such reduction to the bare immediate; it is equally evident that such rejection seriously compromises some of the purely plastic effects which are to be found in the work of the greatest artists. Space-composition and modeling, for example, depend upon revived experience of movement and touch; they are not directly given by paint on canvas; and if all meaning is to go, they must go too.<sup>4</sup> With them go all

<sup>4</sup> Hambidge did exclude space-composition from the range of legitimate plastic effects. Clive Bell's careful avoidance of specific statement on any point makes it impossible to say whether he would exclude it or not; in any case, however, his logic leaves no place for anything so "representative."

rhythm and movement in deep space, and landscape-painting and figure-painting join portraiture in the limbo of the "merely literary."

These consequences are ordinarily found so repellent that only a few pamphleteers, special advocates, and purveyors of new aesthetic pills and powders are willing to accept them. But they may impose also upon critics of real discernment, such as Mr. Roger Fry. Mr. Fry's knowledge and experience are extensive, and his integrity does not permit him to pronounce upon matters of legitimate doubt with the unlimited certainty usually characteristic either of the extremely ignorant, or of the charlatan. He shares, however, the conception of form set forth by Clive Bell, at least to the extent of assuming that form is not only relatively but absolutely independent of the qualities of what art represents. This assumption is fully in harmony with his view of imagination as radically and essentially disjoined from practical life—the cardinal principle of what we have called the museum-theory of art.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See *The Aesthetics of Roger Fry* by Laurence Buermeier, p. 273.

# Continuity of Traditions in Painting<sup>1</sup>

By VIOLETTE DE MAZIA

IF the history of the development of painting is expected to reveal a significance adequate to its subject, a mere narrative of successive art revolutions, of so-called artistic upheavals, becomes illogical, meaningless and altogether out of place.

Art—"a fragment of life presented to us enriched in feelings by means of the creative spirit of the artist"<sup>2</sup>—enters into such close union with life, is so much a part of it, that an understanding of a genuine evolution of painting can be based only upon the very principle that governs life itself: today has its roots in yesterday. Translated into art-terms and applied particularly to painting, it expresses the idea that modern or contemporary art represents a logical *dénouement* from the interplay of preceding traditional forms. This conception is the keystone that firmly supports the educational program of the Barnes Foundation and around which are gathered its collections of old and modern pictures, its French and Persian miniatures and its pieces of Egyptian, Chinese, Hindu, Greek, Negro and contemporary sculpture. The Foundation's courses in art appreciation center upon a tracing of the essential continuity of art traditions. Its program is objectively carried out by demonstrations in

<sup>1</sup> Translated and adapted from *L'Art Ancien à la Fondation Barnes*, by Violette de Mazia, *Les Arts à Paris*, October, 1927.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Mullen, *An Approach to Art*: Barnes Foundation Press.



front of the particular works of art under discussion; it is organized into a practical application of the psychological and scientific principles represented by the most modern methods of education.

When it is said that modern painters resort to similar means—selected and utilized in view of a same general purpose—as those recognized in the paintings of the early Florentines and Venetians, of the Flemings, the Germans or the Spaniards, unless one qualifies the statement, one merely repeats the fact that modern, primitive and medieval artists make use of colored pigments to transform a uniform flat surface into a painting, where line, color and tone may combine into effects of space and volume, and result in more or less decorative and expressive forms.

Aesthetic discernment discriminates between a mere painting and what constitutes a work of art. A piece of canvas covered with color becomes a product of art only in the case where the elements at the disposal of the painter are so brought into play that there results a communication from the artist to the spectator, a communication of his distinctive and personal conception of some actually lived or imagined experience. His means of expression are not borrowed from other spheres of life: literature, photography, morals, each aiming at a totally different result than that of pictorial art is not able to supply the necessary terms of the artist-painter's language. The latter conveys his message directly, i.e., without appeal to outside intermediary agents such as sentimental, anecdotal, religious or historical data. Without recourse to such illicit borrowings, he speaks his own dialect and the plastic means—color, line, light and space, with their innumerable, possible permutations and relations—constitute his vocabulary. From this, it goes without

saying that no method of art-study can be termed intelligent or adequate that does not deal directly with the pictorial elements. These are qualified "plastic" in the sense that they acquire different characteristics and appear under diverse aspects as changes are effected within their sets of relationships; and "plastic form" is a resultant from the synthesis, the fusion of these elements into a unified ensemble in which is resolved, built up and expressed the artist's vision, his reaction to some material or psychological situation of life. Plastic form is thus the medium by which he is able to reveal the qualities of human interest that have impressed and fired his imagination: the urge to express something personal about life and our world is the spark that sets his powers to creative work. To react to one's environment means to be in tune with human life and to be sensitive to the essential values it contains. To have something to say and to embody one's message in a form worthy of art, means to be able to steep it in the character of one's personality: the echo of a song, the plagiarism of an idea, a warmed-up dish, are far from offering the distinctive appeal, the charm or the flavor of the original creation. The criterion of a painter's worth in terms of individuality and propriety of the selected factors of expression, may justly be considered as a standard of appreciation, to the measure of which old or modern art should be submitted. Originality, though not an objective element in an isolated picture, can be sensed and its presence objectively demonstrated by a method of comparative study.

An intelligent appreciation and a just understanding of Titian or Michel Angelo, for example, are not restricted to these artists' work but expands into and is enriched by the recognition of their

forms as they were modified by men like Renoir and Cézanne on one hand, and as they were originated in Bellini, Masaccio or Leonardo on the other. On this line of study, a similar aesthetic purpose, yet a different individual wording of it, is found in modern cubist pictures and in some of the Cologne Masters working in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries. Similarly, an appreciative enjoyment of El Greco or of primitive oriental art leads—plastically speaking—to an analogous appreciation of the contemporary artists, Picasso or Matisse. “Enjoying,” “liking” either the moderns or the old masters without the ability to see them as they stand in the scale of values, in relation to followers and predecessors, is to practice self-deception and to miss the all-important value of the artist’s intelligence, at work in his “purposive reorganization, through action, of the material of experience.”<sup>3</sup>

The comparative-study method questions old and modern masters according to a same criticism of plastic form and directs our judgment toward the thread that links them together. Great artists of today such as Matisse, Picasso, Modigliani, etc., speak in plastic terms; they make use of means intrinsic to painting and, taking their predecessors’ traditions as a foundation-stone, they erect upon it and mould a new form, a creation, not a replica, a form which has its *raison d’être*, its intrinsic value, because it expresses in appropriate terms the interesting personality of the man and contributes an added link to the evolution of art.

In like manner the perception of Giotto’s artistic greatness depends not upon the consideration of his religious subject-matter, but upon that of his plastic form—a selected and definite organization of the elements into the vehicle most competent to convey the

<sup>3</sup> John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*: Macmillan Co.

profound human and universal qualities that had moved the painter. In Giotto's time, in the days of the Italian Primitives, a great number of circumstances attaching to the development of general civilization were a stumbling-block to a clear demarcation between the interest of realizing a purely plastic form and that of illustrating some religious lesson or a narrative of historical events. The gradual freedom from imposed subject-matter and a more direct application of the plastic means to a purely aesthetic expression are characteristics of the development of art from primitive to modern times. The fundamental continuity, however, which brings close together artists apparently so different as Soutine and El Greco, Cézanne and Tintoretto or Michel Angelo, exists independently of subject-matter values, and can be traced and followed back and forth through the particular organization of the plastic form.

The definition of "plastic form" implies that its constituents—color, line, light, space—are malleable elements under the artist's brush. In other words, they are susceptible of acquiring an aspect different from that to which we have become accustomed by our practical interest in our daily contact with Nature. Such distortion—abstraction or emphasis—when found to be intentionally applied to the representative form of objects or relations, is obvious proof of a purpose different than that of reproducing photographically the superficial, visual traits of our surrounding world. From Giotto to Soutine, departure from literal representation is aiming toward the achievement of the best-fitted receptacle for the artist's aesthetic expression, i.e., of the plastic form most representative of his individual experience.

A picture is an argument: the artist lives, reacts,

selects, expresses, and his work becomes the justification of his emotions. Is this sufficient? The justification of someone's emotions is not inevitably interesting, edifying or illuminating; the educative process takes place, however, when, through following the presentation of the argument, a new view-point of our world is attained: this is naturally the place where the Old Masters' contributions become particularly eloquent as a background upon which we may base our judgment of some later painter's originality and worth in the hierarchy of art. Whatever the grade of creative work, former traditions never entirely disappear from it. They appear with more or less subtlety, minor or greater obviousness, according to the painter's ability to grasp their significance in terms of plastic or merely technical values; and no isolated study of either the work of one man or even of the whole tradition of his time can possibly reveal the clue to his proper rank among creators—i.e., artists—in painting. An assemblage of borrowed elements, deprived of any organic relation, characterizes the work of all servile followers, plagiarists without scruples, eclectics, such as exist from the Giottoesque painters through the Renaissance Carraccis, Albanis, Renis, etc., down to the modern Derains or to the contemporary, superficial worshippers of Cézanne, Picasso or Matisse.

A short account of the salient traits of the Florentine and Venetian traditions in relation to a few of their persistent characteristics, as these are found in subsequent forms, may serve as one example upon which the study of genuine art appreciation is based.

The form of the Florentine artists—an outcome of Byzantine paintings and mosaics—engrafts an ampler sense of reality upon the more decorative previous paintings, by means of a fuller content of plastic values.

The key to their richer aesthetic design lies in the relations between a more expressive linear drawing, a delicate, harmonious, though not very deep, color, a firmer modeling, a more effective use of light, and a powerfully rhythmic sequence of masses and spaces. In contrast to this comparatively austere form, controlled by the exigencies of religious teachings, the Venetian picture, on the whole, displays a greater spontaneity of expression, a naturalness due to the interest in the actual world, liberated from the yoke of ancient compulsions or necessities. Color acquires more power, fills a greater number of plastic functions and becomes through these the dominating feature of the Venetian school and its chief contribution to painting. The pigments remain no more as surface coloration between lines of contour—as they were, relatively so, in the Florentines—color appears to filter in, to penetrate into the matter of the object so as to become its truly constructive element. The Venetians *draw* with color; in other words, all the plastic elements—line, light, space, composition, movement, rhythm, etc.—are translated in terms of that element and organize into a form, which, on this account, reaches the highest level of art in painting. Their rich color joins forces with light in such a combination that there results the effect of an enveloping atmosphere which fills the spatial intervals with a colored light and reinforces the aesthetic contribution of the Florentines with an added sense of reality and a profusion of expressive and decorative values.

Besides directly influencing their French, Flemish and German contemporaries, for whom the Italian tradition was a starting point upon which to evolve their own characteristic art movements, both the Florentine and Venetian forms are the backbone of whatever

painting was produced in Europe after their time. The origin of the greater part of the characteristics constituting the value of modern art can be traced back to Giotto's work. His form, gradually modified by later Florentine and Venetian contributions, is still clearly reflected in Poussin's expression—a delicacy adequately adjusted to a force of conviction—and through Poussin, Giotto extends his dominion throughout the entire French school. French art, however, is not that of Florence, neither is it that of Venice: it is a resultant and represents French creative individualities.

Impressionism, for example, is the outcome of an evolution of methods, the original source of which lies in some of the Fifteenth Century Italian painting: Masaccio, before 1428, made use of aerial perspective. By means of definite relations of color to light and to a linear drawing, modified into terms of perspective by which objects further away in the field of vision lose precision of contour, Masaccio bathed his compositions in a translucid haze, a veil of colored light. This actually visible atmosphere originating with his form was subsequently enriched by the Venetian painters, with deeper and more powerful color-overtones. They modified it into a fiery, typically Venetian glow of luminous color. In Claude Lorrain, in the landscapists of Barbizon and Holland, in Rembrandt, in Watteau, in the impressionists, in Renoir, Pascin, Lawson, etc., the atmospheric illusion, though far from being identical to Masaccio's or to that of the early Venetians, is fundamentally the same to a trained eye able to discern the various modifying influences of intermediary traditions, to which it is so adapted and related as to fulfill the requirements of the individual form. From this reorganization of the borrowed plastic factors emerges the determining character of



the new tradition. The technique of the impressionists, for example—i.e., the use of complementary colors, juxtaposed upon the canvas by short and perceptible brushstrokes—absent from Masaccio's form, develops from a technique in use by Constable, Delacroix or, though less generally so, by Rubens in the Sixteenth Century. On the other hand, though Masaccio's figures are simplified in their details, and their drawing non-photographically rendered, the simplifications apparent in the form initiated by Monet have greater affinity to those that characterize the Spanish tradition of Velasquez, and particularly so, as they became more generalized in Manet's grasp and reintegration of them. Impressionism—"revolutionary" modern conception of art—extends its tentacles as far as early Florence and Venice, toward Spain, Flanders, England. . . .

Seurat, one of Monet's direct descendants, continued to work in the Venetian manner, in that color is the organizing element of his canvases. In "Les Poseuses," however, this Venetian-Impressionist form is re-created in terms of clear-cut units of spatial composition leading back to the classic gracefulness of the Florentine expression in Raphael. Without a knowledge of the essence of these past traditions it is evidently beyond the means of any so-called educational method to ever grasp or even approach the real meaning, force and *finesse* of a work of art. When Cézanne, Matisse, Prendergast, etc., disregard literal effects of perspective, for the sake of a definite, plastic design, they are interpreting in personal terms the distorted spatial and linear relations characteristic of Uccello. Uccello's distortion of a naturally receding background into a contrasting but rhythmically related screen is repeated in Fra Filippo Lippi with variations, and is

a foretaste of the modern fusion of foreground, middle distance and background as realized by Manet, Pissarro, Seurat, Renoir, Cézanne, Matisse or Rousseau le Douanier. In the latter, the spatial theme is impregnated with a naïveté of presentation very becoming to the comparative literalness of the Florentine tradition where a number of his inspirations were born.

The most modern artists of our day are constantly affected, directly or through modified intermediary forms, by the influence of the old masters and primitives. Piero della Francesca reappears in Puvis de Chavannes, and also in Picasso, in the use of color, of linear drawing, of light and modeling. Picasso's plastic talent as an illustrator places him in a class with Raphael and Michel Angelo. Nor has El Greco's meaning escaped Picasso's sensitive intelligence: he borrows the contorted line, the general distortion and elongation, the dramatic contrast of color and light; but in his pictures they become associated with other borrowings from Daumier, Manet, Cézanne. These plastic qualities are thus converted into a new version, which represents an incontestably modern, a Picasso creation. This distorted linear element, so typical of El Greco's writhing compositions, does not, however, originate with him. A whole century before El Greco, Andrea del Castagno broke up the Florentine linear drawing into a series of small color-and-light units, which he used in terms of linear circular rhythms to lend movement and life to the ensemble of the composition. The "swirl" innovated by him in the Fifteenth Century persists throughout the various artistic evolutions, ever essentially the same and ever modified by the individuality of the creative artist. Under different aspects, in various sets of relations, fulfilling varied rôles, it contributes to Botticelli's decorative

appeal as well as to Greco's, Rubens's, Delacroix's, Fragonard's variedly expressive forms. It can easily be discerned as one of the most powerful factors in pictures by Renoir, Cézanne, Pascin, Rouault, etc.

An intelligently conducted study, based upon the fundamental significance of traditional plastic forms, is the only method capable of leading an interested student of art along the trajectory followed by this evolution and continuity of aesthetic principles.

An innate sensitivity and a trained sense for relations of things, are the necessary complements to this method of education in art. This means that if, for instance, we are looking for traces of Leonardo's influence upon the schools of painting that succeeded him, we must be able to recognize it in the Venetians, even if his modeling in isolated medium of light and shade is but the foundation upon which they draw and build up solid three-dimensional volumes in terms of structural color. Leonardo's principle still governs in Renoir, Cézanne or Matisse, but modified by the Venetians, enriched by the numerous intervening traditions and adequately adapted to their respective plastic entities. Matisse may juxtapose a red to a yellow, and each of the colored areas will act a double part in the inter-relations of the plastic terms; the red, for example, while an active factor in the color-organization of the canvas, may play toward the yellow a modeling rôle of shadow.

If Cézanne and Renoir, the masters *par excellence* of the modern movement in art, reveal their heavy debt to the great ones of the past, their work is too honest to demand any commentary. Cézanne's borrowings from El Greco, Tintoretto, Michel Angelo, Delacroix, from Courbet, Manet, Monet, are legitimate loans. He pays back to art the debt of an honest

and scrupulous artist and gives, in place of a possible and facile plagiarism, a new form, a creation none other than Cézanne's own, impregnated with a power of color and conviction not found again, even in the masterpieces of his obliging inspirators.

As to Renoir, no intelligent student can seriously pretend to a just appreciation or an adequate enjoyment of his form, who has not assimilated the essential plastic qualities of Greek statuary, of Giorgione, of Titian, Tintoretto, Rubens, Fragonard, Boucher, Monet. His personality has distilled these various traditions into a characteristic Renoir quintessence, which he poured over his canvases, with the *bouquet* of his own vintage.

In this attempt to trace the continuity of traditions in painting, let us sieve through our method a few of the contemporary painters. We may eliminate eclectics like Derain, as well as plagiarists who have nothing of their own to say, and pass on to artists like Utrillo, Modigliani, Chirico, Soutine, who attain to the level of important creators.

Chirico's dissociation of figures into geometrical shapes organizes into certain linear, color and spatial relations similar to some plastic effects attained by Uccello; his rhythmic contrasts are comparable to Ingres's; Perugino and Raphael are largely responsible for his spatial compositions, and Tintoretto and El Greco for the dramatic contrasts of his masses in space. Chirico has assimilated the contributions of his various predecessors, he incorporates them into a new entity, representative of a personally expressive interpretation.

Utrillo, Soutine, Modigliani take from Manet the luminous quality of color, the technique of brushwork, his generalization and elimination of detail; they take

the essence of his form, the meaning of his contribution, and so merge it with elements similarly borrowed from other sources as to bring into existence new plastic forms.

Utrillo adds to Manet what he learns from Tintoretto, from the Venetians in general, in the richness and the structural quality of color. He plays with space in a manner comparable to that of Uccello, absorbs Corot's poetic charm of landscape and dissolves it all into the important debt which he maintains toward the impressionists.

Soutine's brushwork and general use of color and light are also easily traceable to impressionism. However, in order to find the origin of his grotesque but plastically expressive distortions, we should understand some of the Egyptian sculpture-designs of the Fourth Century B.C., some of the primitive Negro wooden statues and masks, and we should know the Venetians, particularly Tintoretto and his dramatic use of light-and-color contrasts. Soutine's color is structural; he applies it upon the canvas in series of small, powerfully rich units: Cézanne's dabs and patches, applied with comparative reflective deliberateness and restraint, are replaced in Soutine by a freer, more spontaneous and dashing technique and by a greater opposition of more brilliant color-notes, i.e., a merging of van Gogh's method with the above-mentioned earlier inspirations.

The contribution of Modigliani consists of a form that embraces certain attributes of the work of Manet and Cézanne, plus the decorative linear gracefulness of the early Florentines and the structural color-values of the Venetians. These borrowings are fused with a translation into painting terms of important plastic values of primitive Negro sculpture.

An objective pointing out of these various subtleties of relations and a practical comparative study in front of the very pictures discussed easily verify our fundamental art-to-life principle of relation in the sense that either modern or contemporary art is an outgrowth, a flowering, which draws its strength and life from the sturdy roots implanted by the great masters of the past.

## Dürer and Holbein <sup>1</sup>

By ALBERT C. BARNES

### Dürer

THE German tradition rose to its greatest height in Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528). We have seen that the best of the Cologne school found much inspiration in the work of van Eyck and in that of the early Florentines. Dürer retains this van Eyck-Italian influence plus its accretions in the early Cologne Masters, but these are chiefly points of departure for the creation of new and very personal entities. He is German to the backbone and derives more directly from the Cologne men's own contributions than from their adaptations of other traditions. His greatest debt is to Stephan Lochner, especially in composition and the marvelous delicacy and expressiveness of line. He always paints in plastic terms of his own creation, unique in subtlety and grasp of character. Throughout the course of his career, his work shows a profuse variety of forms, from his early portraits painted between 1490 and 1500 to his compositions of 1520 and 1526. Numerous experiments and many adaptations of previous and contemporary traditions are perceptible throughout, but always with his own personality paramount. His earlier works—the portraits of himself in the Louvre, the Prado, the Munich Pinakothek, and those of his father in the Uffizi and the National Gallery—show a

<sup>1</sup> From *The Art in Painting* by Albert C. Barnes: Harcourt, Brace and Co.



more subdued color-scheme than that generally employed later. At a distance his color seems to be of a rather uniform tone, but it is so interspersed with light and so related to shadow and space that a great variety of subtle hues of the same color are obtained. What strikes one at first, in his self-portraits in the Louvre and Prado, is the wonderfully subtle and glowing color. Although no one color predominates, and none stands out as especially brilliant, the hues and tones are welded into an impressive and convincing totality. His color has not yet the structural quality nor the brilliance of the great Venetians, but these self-portraits prove Dürer's rank as a colorist. Here, his color-power is realized in a manner more akin to that of Michel Angelo, Daumier and Rembrandt; that is, light, line and space are so dominated by color that one feels color-power despite the lack of varied or brilliant colors. What Dürer accomplishes here with a grayish-green, grayish-blue or other subdued color is what Daumier and Rembrandt do with deep golden-browns; these portraits are neither dark nor somber: an effulgence radiates from within the color. Grünewald in his "Crucifixion," and El Greco owe something to Dürer in a kind of lurid, eerie, ethereal quality of the color. The lack of actually brilliant tones is compensated for by a series of fine, extraordinarily active rhythms of space and light, together with delicate, inner linear patterns made up of features, wrinkles, hair, etc., reminiscent of some of van Eyck's faces. There is also a vague similarity to some of Mantegna's work in which the effects, due to linear patterns in faces and to distortions of color related to those patterns, are made more delicate and are organized by Dürer into a richer plastic form. Very few painters have equaled Dürer in linear delicacy and charm. In

general, his line is Florentine in its sharpness, with a general curvilinear character, light, fluid and graceful. It resembles Botticelli's line but is infinitely richer, both in the fuller expressiveness of the line itself and in the way line is harmoniously merged with and reinforced by the other plastic means. His great ability to merge line with the other plastic elements appears from a comparative study of his Louvre crayon-portrait of "Erasmus" with one of Holbein's drawings, "Head of a Man," in the same room. Holbein's is merely a linear contour portrait to which shadows have been added while in the Dürer, shadows, light and line combine and function as a unit. In the clean-cut and rhythmic character of his line, Dürer resembles Vivarini, with the important difference that in the latter the line is totally unrelieved by color-reinforcement. The narrow, inklike line, noted in some of the earlier Cologne panels, reappears at times in Dürer.

In his later pictures, of the period after 1500, the color-scheme takes on a different range of tones. The individual colors become bright, as in his "Adoration of the Magi" in Florence, "The Saints" in Munich, "Portrait of a Girl" in Berlin, or even daringly brilliant as in the "Madonna" in Berlin. In this "Madonna" he shows his ability to take the conventional, brilliant, glaring color-scheme of the early Italians, made more heavy by the Cologne school, relate the colors to one another harmoniously, and convert them into striking, predominantly linear patterns. This proves what a great creator he was. The bright colors here are more a utilization of the Cologne school color-scheme than of the Italian. This seems to be an experiment out of the regular line of Dürer's work in which he succeeds in taking away the tinselly, raucous quality of the individual colors in a manner similar to the most daring

of Matisse's work. For instance, in the background of the "Madonna" a small, narrow, ivory band is used to bring into relation two contrasting brilliant colors—red and green—in Matisse's manner of using a broad colored outline to effect a similar purpose. At that period, some of Dürer's pictures, e.g., the "Head of a Woman" at Berlin, recall Bellini in their broader, less linear drawing and looser contour.

Dürer's large compositions are less successful as powerful organic unities than his portraits and episodic pictures, but they reveal a fine feeling for the ordered placing of objects on a single plane as well as in deep space, and for uniting the individual patterns of line, light, color and space with the total pattern of the pictures. Both of his compositions in Vienna, "Ten Thousand Martyrs of Nicodemia" and "Adoration of the Trinity by all the Saints," show his derivation from the Cologne Masters. "Ten Thousand Martyrs of Nicodemia," similar to Cranach's composition in the same gallery, in which many figures in a landscape are depicted in active movement, probably owes a debt to Lochner's "Last Judgment"; this debt appears in the space-composition and in the grotesque characterization. The drawing is highly expressive and, while the active movement is felt everywhere, there is no feeling of affectation or unsuccessful expression. The structural quality of color, about equal to that in the Louvre self-portrait, contributes to variety and the feeling of reality. The rendering of the ground in this picture sometimes approaches a Giorgione-Courbet-like solidity. In "Adoration of the Trinity by all the Saints," the bright colors of Baldung are present, but with the glaring effect avoided. Dürer's derivations from the Master of Marienleben and the Master of the Lyversberg Passion are clearly traceable in this picture, while

the composition is reminiscent of Titian's "Assumption." Dürer here shows less departure from the conventional form of the Cologne tradition than in his portraits.

The lurid, eerie quality of the flesh, noted in some of his early portraits, is absent in his later ones. After he achieved that original and striking note, he apparently abandoned it and adopted a more traditional method of painting flesh as a point of departure for his own creations. The faces in his later portraits have a general reddish-yellow monochrome effect, similar to that of Holbein, but with the addition of a new and characteristic pinkish element which differentiates the flesh from that of all the rest of the German portrait-painters. This color is fundamentally different from the lurid, ghastly, ivory-white in the Louvre self-portrait. It is part of a new and well-organized color-scheme of delicate colors, mostly light-blue background, reddish-yellowish-pinkish-brownish flesh, and brownish-yellow furs. This color-ensemble is a real, definite, powerful form. In general, the flowing line of his earlier work persists; it is rather sharp, defining contour, and making patterns in face, hair, etc., which set off the light, delicate color-scheme. Inspected closely, the face and hands give the essential feeling of flesh, but not a literal representation. The unnatural color, while constituting a distortion, does not lessen his grasp of the essential quality of the flesh; in other words, he uses human flesh as a point of departure for the creation of a multitude of linear, color and spatial relations, which unify in a general form highly expressive of human character. The head and chest of "Hieronymus Holzschuher" show creative use of the plastic means to make a deeply expressive unit, contrasted and merged with the light-blue of the background and the

yellowish-brown of the fur, in a balanced and harmonious total plastic form. In the painting of hair and gowns, Dürer owes much to Stephan Lochner and something to the Master of Marienleben, but Dürer's color is richer and imparts a deeper and more real feeling to stuffs. In this respect he is again greater than Cranach, in whose work the stuffs seem to be merely paint. The filiform painting of the hair and the beard in the portrait of "Hieronymus Holzschuher" affords an instance in which literal, almost photographic, realism does no damage to the plastic value of a picture, since it is the work of an authentic artist. In spite of this detailed representation, Dürer's art carries conviction in his profound grasp of character. Dignity, placidity, strength, gentleness, character, poetry, receive legitimate plastic embodiment.

On the whole, Dürer makes use of the German tradition, but he creates a new form in which the characteristic heaviness is lost, and all the strength and force retained. In that form, one feels the fluidity, grace, charm and power peculiar to Dürer. He is the most important of the Germans both as a painter and as an artist: he ranks with Giorgione, Rembrandt, Titian, Velasquez and the few other supreme masters.

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### Holbein

THE works of Hans Holbein, the Younger (1497-1543), rank with those of Dürer, Rembrandt and Titian in popular esteem and financial value. His short life was full of rich experiences that came from wide travel and contact with many of the leading characters of his time, whose portraits he painted. He was born in Basle, lived much in England, and traveled often in

Italy and the Netherlands. It is natural, therefore, that his work should show the influence of van Eyck, the Flemings in general, the Florentines, and the Venetians. But his stock was German and his form is based upon that tradition as it came through the Cologne Masters, after they had assimilated the contributions of preceding schools. Holbein makes, generally, a fair use of the traditions, with enough personal modification to merit some distinction. He shows no deliberate imitation, but neither does he show any striking individuality, such as would place him on a level with the great men of the past or present. Occasionally, his pictures are mere hash-ups of attenuated and debased features of former schools, and they are, then, scarcely more than imitations of the early Germans such as Bruyn or Cranach, or of early Italians such as Ambrogio da Predis.

Holbein is essentially a portrait-painter who renders human character less by legitimate plastic means than by literal reproduction of detail. Thanks to his extraordinary skill he reproduced a wealth of ornament with minuteness and precision. His painting of detailed stuffs, however, is vastly inferior to that of Domenico Veneziano and his Italian contemporaries, from which it is derived, and to that of the important French painters of the Sixteenth Century, such as the Clouets and Corneille de Lyon. Compared with the latter Holbein's heaviness, coarseness and expressive and decorative inferiority are flagrant. In comparison with Dürer's, Holbein's handling of stuffs is a mechanical application of pigment. How slight, finicky and overemphasized is Holbein's painting of detail appears from the contrast between his "Portrait of Merchant Georg Gisze," in Berlin, with Quentin Metsys's treatment of the same type of objects in "The

Banker and his Wife," in the Louvre. In this latter picture particular objects take their place as compositional masses related to other masses of color, line, space and light; in the Holbein they are a series of itemized articles.

His color has some structural character but does not attain the power and reality of the great Venetians, or of van Eyck or Petrus Christus. On the whole, it is nearer the old German tradition of Bruyn, Grünewald and Schongauer. In nearly all of Holbein's painting of flesh there is a puttylike uniformity, a wooden character destitute of the vital quality of flesh. In his Louvre portraits, the reddish-brown tone of the flesh is repeated mechanically and uninterestingly in faces and hands, with no variation to meet the individuality of the face or hand painted. Only occasionally, as in the portrait of "Christina of Denmark," in the National Gallery, is flesh rendered with reality and conviction. This portrait has more kinship with the Flemish than with any other tradition, but even here, though the redness of the Louvre pictures gives place to a more literal flesh-color, the painting remains mechanical: there is as always a radical lack of imagination.

Holbein's most direct link with the Italians is seen in the decided tendency toward a unification of his pictures by means of a sort of reddish-brown glow, a fusion of color with light, which came from Bellini and was used by all the Venetians. Except possibly in Grünewald's "Crucifixion" at Colmar, this suffusion of color does not appear in any of the earlier Germans. It is likely that Holbein derived it from the Venetians, but it lacks the glow and richness found in Titian or Tintoretto. When Holbein uses bright colors, as in "Anne of Cleves," the result is a patterned rather than



a colorful picture. The apparent richness in "The Ambassadors" is due to surface-illumination more than to any penetrating depth or glow from within. His organization of paintings by means of the color-suffusion is mechanical and unvaried: the poor effect arises not only from the monotony but also from the aridity and bleakness of the individual colors. The color-suffusion seems, on the whole, to be also an unimaginatively used technical device.

At times Holbein's light recalls Carpaccio's: it is related to large areas of color, which are ivory-gray in Carpaccio, chiefly brownish- or reddish-yellow in Holbein. The patterns of light are usually conventional. Modeling of faces is done in the manner of Leonardo, but Holbein improves upon Leonardo by injecting a fairly structural color into the shadows and so adding a certain force and richness.

The monotony of Holbein's surfaces is often varied and relieved by linear patterns in faces, figures and incidental objects, which testify to the fact that he is a greater draughtsman than painter. The tightness of his line is that of the Florentines, such as Vivarini, with something of the character of the Twelfth and Fourteenth Century Chinese artists; the latter, however, not only integrated line with light and color more successfully in isolated units, but organized their pictures as a whole more completely and with greater delicacy.

The one plastic element that Holbein uses with most success is space. Often a multitude of units, finely placed in space, are related to one another in all parts of the canvas and make a very interesting pattern. Sharp line and effective contrast of light and shadow increase the appeal of these designs in space-composition. Yet fine as the individual units are, the groups

are not so related to each other to form an integrated whole: they lack the organizing force of color. Carpaccio's striking space-composition, in contrast, is achieved by variations in the colored objects themselves, so that the relation of his ivory tone with that of the objects and intervals produces organic color-effects of which Holbein is incapable.

Compared to those of Dürer, Holbein's figures seem merely posed: they lack grace, fluidity, vitality. His pictures chiefly represent the virtuosity of an able craftsman. Exceptions to this rule are his two portraits of Erasmus—one at Basle, the other in the Louvre—in both of which there is a satisfactory realization of character in good plastic terms. As an artist, his chief claim to distinction is that he rarely fails to relate line, color, space and light to each other. However, these plastic means are often too easily differentiated; though they are related, they are practically never merged or integrated into a single expressive form, as they are in the great Venetians or Flemings. Photographic representation skillfully executed probably explains Holbein's popular appeal.

# The Transition to Modern Painting<sup>1</sup>

BY ALBERT C. BARNES

IN order to show the general nature of the traditions which have played an important part in the development of painting, and how they are utilized and modified by individuals, it is necessary to consider briefly the historical aspects. Old traditions constantly emerge in even the most recent painting, as, for example, Tintoretto in Soutine, the Persian miniatures in Matisse. One can judge of the individuality and importance of a painter only by referring to the sources of his effects, and by observing how these effects are combined with those from other sources. If the artist is a real creator these effects pass through the crucible of his own personality and emerge as new forms. If they are seen to be destitute of organic relationships, the painter is a mere imitator, as in the case of academicians like Paxton or Redfield, or of an eclectic like Derain.

Modern painting developed out of mosaics. These are substantially in a single plane, that is, flat, and really amount to little more than colored patterns, with an illustrative appeal. Although many mosaics are positive creations of definite art value, their subject-matter is usually stereotyped or unreal, with little or no sign of personal expression. Convention was the

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *The Art in Painting* by Albert C. Barnes: Harcourt, Brace and Co.

rule and individual expression the exception. The aesthetic effects spring from color and line composed harmoniously into what is really decoration. The absence of light, modeling and perspective, and the use of a rigid line resulted in figures stiff and not individualized and in highly formal compositions, with very simple rhythms.

Departure from this flat decorative pattern began with the gradual introduction of perspective, illumination and modeling, and their application to more realistic subject-matter, so that painting became more expressive, through command of a greater number of plastic means, and increased personal feeling in the painter.

The line of demarcation between painting which is and which is not modern is difficult to draw with exactness, but it is clear that impressionism made a sharp break with the traditions that preceded it. For practical purposes, contemporary painting may be said to date from the age of Courbet, Manet, Monet and Pissarro. In the work of these men, the motives of the latter men are present, although not disengaged from the traditions which went before. The chief point of difference between the old and the new may be said to be that the moderns exhibit greater interest in relatively pure design.

In order to show the development of this interest, it will be necessary to trace the evolution of plastic design as something in itself, apart from the question of subject-matter. Criticism of any work of plastic art is valid in so far as it concerns itself with the form the artist has created out of the means at his disposal, namely, line, color and space. That is as true of the work of the Renaissance painters as it is of Cézanne or Matisse, and there can be no reasonable doubt that

what makes the art of Giotto great is not the religious subject-matter, but the plastic form, the design, by which deep human values are conveyed. A variety of circumstances prevented the early Italian painters from making a sharp distinction between their interest in design and their interest in illustrating a religious or historical narrative. The spirit and state of culture of the early Renaissance required that painting fulfill definite public functions. It was necessary that church frescoes should illustrate religious motives, that portraits should reproduce their originals, that pictures ordered by states or guilds should portray specific occurrences of interest to their purchasers. The general conditions were such that books were accessible only to the few, and their function was largely taken over by painting. All these circumstances made it impossible that properly plastic or pictorial motives should operate without constraint. The history of the transition to modern painting consists of an account of the removal of all such irrelevant compulsions, and of how the employment of the various plastic means came to be more and more directed to the realization of pure design. Such an account will make clear the essential continuity between painters apparently as diverse as Piero della Francesca and Picasso, Tintoretto and Cézanne.

Design, as it is found in modern and contemporary painting, appears in the work of the early Italians whenever literal reproduction is so modified that the arrangement and handling of objects make a more aesthetically moving plastic form. Giotto is, in his way, as far from literalism as Renoir. If we compare Giotto with his inferior contemporaries, we see at once that a large number of his simplifications must have been conscious departures from photographic repre-

sentation. These departures are of the very essence of the appeal of his themes, and are clearly expressive of an interest in plastic form for itself. Even though his designs are always accompanied by a narrative, they embody the spirit, and not the details, of this narrative. In other words, they express a human interest of essential value in terms truly plastic, and such expressiveness is inevitably an enhancement and not a distraction. In this sense Giotto seems far more modern than such painters as van Dyck, Reynolds, or David, in whom the rôle of painting is instrumental to such cheap human activities as personal flattery or surface imitation.

In the early Florentines, Uccello and Fra Filippo Lippi, interest in design was so paramount that contemporary academic critics propagate the obvious misconception that Uccello was principally an experimenter in perspective. But considered from the plastic standpoint, his work is a striking illustration of the value of a design which discards an imitative presentation of the spatial relationships of objects in favor of one which has greater intrinsic value. Fra Filippo Lippi distorted perspective in still another manner, and achieved a design which is akin plastically to that used by most of the important painters since Courbet.

Design is the animating motive in drawing whenever there is simplification or deliberate distortion directed to heightening of aesthetic effect; this is clearly discernible in Andrea del Castagno, in Michel Angelo, in El Greco, in Rubens and other great painters. In all of them it is only partly representative and more aesthetic or expressive in intent. In the Fifteenth Century Florentine, Masaccio, the deliberate distortions of line, light, and color produce an appearance that is both realistic and infinitely more moving aesthetically

than any literal or photographic representation could be. The paintings of these great artists prove the absurdity of those ultramodern writers who contend that plastic form is an absolute creation of the artist, in which no attempt is made to render the quality of anything in nature. We maintain that such form can be no more than decoration, that plastic form at its best does seek to give an equivalent of something real—of fundamental aspects, of essences, though not of insignificant detail. In fact, at all stages in the history of painting, from Masaccio to Manet and Matisse, the departures from literalism by which a more satisfactory design is secured, accomplish *also* a better effect of realism. We have not gotten farther away from realities, but nearer to them.

Another form of modernism is anticipated in Botticelli, in whom design, free from realistic representation, concerns itself chiefly with decoration. This inferior order of design has its modern counterpart in those cubistic paintings in which design is reduced to the level of mere pattern; this is in the same category, aesthetically, as the pattern in a rug.

When a painter uses color which departs from the observable color of an object, that also constitutes distortion. Such distortion has been constantly practiced to enhance the value of design, notably by all the great Venetians. The Venetian glow, a circumambient atmosphere of color, is obviously a color-distortion introduced to modify, harmonize, emphasize, and set off the colorful aspect of things, so that the effects are richer than those ever found in nature. The most original element in the work of Matisse, that is, his interest in color-combinations for their own sake, is thus clearly foreshadowed in the Venetians. But this similarity is overlooked because of the great differ-



ences in perspective, solidity, and the quality of colors used by the Venetians and those used by Matisse.

Light is also distorted from its naturalistic effects in the interests of design. When used naturalistically, light accomplishes some degree of modeling and sets off color; but those are only a few of its functions in contributing to great effects in art. In Leonardo, for example, it does much more than this. Its modeling function is strongly accentuated and the way it falls upon surfaces is not in accordance with physical laws of literal reproduction in any given situation, but is so modified that it makes an independent pattern. It would be manifestly absurd to accuse Leonardo, one of the most advanced scientists of his day, of ignorance of the physical laws that govern the incidence and reflection of light; it is more reasonable to suppose that his distortions of light were used deliberately, with the aesthetic motive of forming an independent pattern. Both Leonardo and Raphael used light in the same manner, even to the extent of an accentuation that disturbs the balance of plastic means. A better use of light as an independent pattern that unifies in the total plastic form is found in the most of the painters of the Venetian school, in Rubens, Claude and practically all the important moderns and contemporaries.

Line, light, and color are all highly distorted in El Greco, partly to heighten the effect of religious mysticism, but mainly to achieve a form of intrinsic interest which adds to the direct moving power of the picture without going through the circuit of appeal to the emotions aroused by religious imagery. Rembrandt's chiaroscuro is distorted light employed for two distinct and obvious purposes, first to show an objective fact, such as a face of three-dimensional solidity; second, as a means of making a particular arrangement of color

and line with a specific effect different from that yielded by ordinary illumination. Even in Velasquez, where the effect of the picture as a whole is apparently realistic, the realism, like that of Masaccio, is attained by many departures from exact reproduction, all of which contribute directly to the creation of a form far more effective than any arrangement of objects literally depicted. In all these painters there is interest in illustration, but the purely plastic interest is present though it has not yet appeared in isolation.

The actual process of transition is to be seen in the impressionists, in whose work literal representation is scarcely attempted; the drawing is very broad, and much greater liberties are taken with the actual coloring of objects than in the earlier painters. With the impressionists it is the mode of presentation and not the object presented that counts. For example, in Manet's "Olympia" it is apparent that the interest lies in the composition and that the story is unimportant. The strangely modeled and proportioned woman placed in just that position and in just those relations with surrounding objects, creates something independent and more moving than any story. This picture represents an advance towards abstract plastic form when compared with, say, Rubens's "Judgment of Paris," in which it would be much easier for the spectator to lose his way in the narrative.

One of the most important innovations of the impressionists was the distortion of perspective. Instead of representing foreground, middle distance, and background in terms of literal perspective, they distributed light and color all over the canvas. The result is a homogeneous color-mass, embracing the entire painting, making a unified plastic form.

This relative freedom from literary or photographic

interest, that is, from the interests which are not plastic, recurs in all the impressionists. Their very technique, the use of divided color, is itself a departure from literalism, since it replaces a merely imitative rendering of colored surfaces by one in which the colorfulness of objects is better realized. In Monet, the sense of design is less vigorous than in Manet or in Pissarro, and he sometimes falls victim to an interest in the effect of sunlight on color, which interest is more photographic than plastic. But the greater artists of the group, Renoir and Cézanne, used sunlight and divided tones only as means to the achievement of a design which is purely plastic. Their forms are richer, more powerful, more convincing, than those of any of their predecessors in the Nineteenth Century. They not only sum up the painters who preceded them in much the same way that Poussin and Rubens summed up the painting of the Renaissance, but they created new forms that stimulated their followers to the creation of still other and different plastic forms. From impressionism all that is best in contemporary painting has been developed. It may be said that in Renoir and Cézanne, design is more completely realized in terms of color than in any of the early great painters, and that this would not have been possible without the researches of Monet and those who followed him. To them is due the credit for forging the instrument by means of which the effects characteristic of modern art at its best were achieved.

## Renoir and Cézanne<sup>1</sup>

By ALBERT C. BARNES

### Renoir

AT all stages of his career, Renoir's (1841-1919) work was as personal and his use of the plastic means as original as that of any painter since the time of the Renaissance. His earliest work was done under the influence of Courbet and of the Velasquez-Goya tradition; but Courbet's naturalism is freed from its heaviness and the Velasquez-Goya influence is endowed with a new delicacy and charm reminiscent of the Eighteenth Century French painters, though with an added note of strength.

From the very start Renoir's mastery of color and his extraordinary facility in using paint are the outstanding characteristics. His work of the early seventies is a long succession of pictures that, for color and difficult achievements with paint, compare with any by his great predecessors. The paintings of figures and of interiors at that period have deep reality with a strength, delicacy and charm that make them comparable to the best work of Velasquez, Vermeer, Chardin and Corot. Goya's superb rendering of the light, diaphanous quality of stuffs is carried to greater heights by Renoir's finer feeling for color: a piece of filmy material covering a darker one is so painted that

<sup>1</sup> From *The Art in Painting* by Albert C. Barnes: Harcourt, Brace and Co.

the individuality of each textile is reinforced by a rich but transparent glow.

These early pictures of Renoir's were painted before the development of the impressionistic use of divided color tones. At that period he worked somewhat in the manner of Manet's simplifications and broad brushwork but with more and richer color and with less evidence of Manet's obvious technique. There is no suggestion of the reds which he afterwards employed profusely, but there is great sensuous richness everywhere, heightened by the blue tinting of the shadows, variegated in the background by chords of color, merged with line, and so pervasively active as to function powerfully in composing the picture. The drawing is done chiefly with color and there is a striking fluidity of line. Every painting is a composite of many subsidiary designs, made up of line, light and color, and merged into units that relate themselves to each other harmoniously. The light arranges itself into a subtle pleasing pattern and also contributes to the modeling, in which color does not yet operate so powerfully as in the later pictures. The three-dimensional effects are not emphasized but are subtle, achieved without apparent effort, and they have a degree of convincing reality akin, sometimes to that of Vermeer or Corot, sometimes to Velasquez's.

The transition to Renoir's next period is marked by a change in technique. In the pictures painted in the late seventies there are suggestions of the impressionistic use of juxtaposed brush-strokes or spots or streaks of contrasting color, which at a distance fuse into a single expanse of bright color; but the effect is a certain obviousness of technique which was later overcome. Contrasted with his earlier pictures, these show a greater variety of colors. The rather uniform blue

and ivory previously employed are supplemented by reds, yellows, and browns, used sometimes pure, sometimes modified with light, so that a whole gamut of color-variations is secured. As time goes on, this method of painting in juxtaposed color-spots is used more and more, but it is always used judiciously and is varied by means of broad areas of paint in certain parts of the canvas. This method causes the colors to melt into each other and gives a creamy, velvety quality, as in the "Pourville"<sup>2</sup> landscape, and an opulent decorative effect which Monet never secured. At other times, the predominance of color-spots used in connection with bright sunlight, as in the "Bougival"<sup>2</sup> landscape, yields comparatively superficial effects, more like those of Monet and Sisley.

In all of the landscapes of the early eighties there is extensive use of the divisionistic manner, but its application to different material is so infinitely resourceful that both the color and the compositional effects are far more varied and powerful than those of Monet.

Renoir's researches in the impressionistic manner developed new technical resources that merged perfectly with his previous Velasquez-Goya-Manet methods. The realistic results of his earlier period were increased by sensuous charm, by an added structural use of color, and by a glowing iridescence. His contributions had changed the impressionistic technique from a mere device into a power for greater creation and more complete organization of the whole painting. It became one of the great and firmly founded traditions.

During the eighties Renoir developed temporarily a third style, marked by sharp, incisive line and dryness, almost acidity, of color. Its obvious linear quality led

<sup>2</sup> The Barnes Foundation Collection.

critics to assert that Renoir's work of that period is closely akin to that of Ingres, but the resemblance is all on the surface. The radical difference is that in Ingres the line is fundamental and the color, which is comparatively perfunctory, thin, and unreal, is mere decoration added to the linear structure. In Renoirs even of that period, it is the color that is fundamental; it builds up structures and welds together compositions as it never does in Ingres. The sharp line is merely a particular way of bringing colors into relation, and it compels the eye to follow the rhythms of color as constituting masses in deep space, rather than the movement and direction of the line itself. Ingres's line is tight and restrained, while Renior's is free and more expressive of abandon.

Renoir's manner at this time is often considered a regression to the methods of earlier painters, but the modeling and other uses of the plastic means are distinctively Renoir's own. That the method was clearly an experiment in the direction of new color-forms is shown, and justified, by the fact that the sharp line and the acid color gave a fluid, luminous quality to the forms such as no other painter ever achieved except in water-color. The worst that can be said of these pictures is that the color is structurally less successful than it later became and it was probably for that reason that Renoir abandoned the method.

In the late eighties, he turned his attention toward the development of a technique that would enable him to render the movement of volumes in deep space, and in 1889 he succeeded in doing it with great conviction and appeal. These masses are so free from minute detail or obvious realism that, to an inexperienced observer, they often seem to be scarcely solid at all. But plastically considered they realize perfectly the



essence of the massive quality, without its adventitious detail, in a degree comparable to that of Rembrandt and Velasquez. The rhythm is made more pervasive and powerful by the flow of color throughout the picture, partly by the modification of local color in the interest of harmony and partly by the use of a color-suffusion which recalls the Venetian glow. As Renoir perfected his individual form, the rendering of masses gradually became less clearly defined, more floating and vaporous, but not less convincing. The impressionistic technique has become more and more generalized, and the individual brush-strokes appear subtly, and only in restricted parts of the canvas. By this time Renoir had reached the point of giving the large-scale effects of landscape with an impressiveness worthy of Claude, to which he added the grasp of the spirit of local place, the *intime* charm of Constable. This combination of epic grandeur, of lyric charm, and of a dramatic quality, appears in Renoir's landscape-painting throughout the rest of his life.

In the nineties, the technique itself comes to be so completely flexible that a distinctive quality is given to each repetition of the same subject in only slightly altered form. At this period he painted a series of pictures of the same young girl, each of which is so varied in color and drawing that there is no suggestion of duplication. Delicacy, charm, and reality are attained in each one, but they are different and distinctive in each case. Drawing, by means of color, has become extremely fluid, and there is fidelity to the characteristic feeling of things, worthy of Velasquez. Literalism is completely avoided and all the ordinary means of rendering solidity, outline, perspective, begin to be replaced by obvious distortions. The interest in relatively abstract design comes to be more and more

dominant. Recognizable objects never fully disappear, but they are very freely rendered and their significance becomes almost purely plastic, that is, they are conceived chiefly as elements in the design. It is ability to accomplish this, with no loss of conviction, no degradation of the form to the status of mere pattern, that marks Renoir as an artist of the first magnitude. His design is created out of many lesser designs, so that every part of his canvases has an intrinsic interest as well as a functional interest, the whole forming a monumental effect comparable with that of Giorgione or Titian. His pictures have come to be as varied and harmonious as a fugue or symphony.

At the beginning of the present century, Renoir had reached the full control of his powers and thereafter he deepened and enriched still further his color-values. In his figures there is an increasing use of red and a more voluminous and more voluptuous three-dimensional solidity. In his landscapes there is often a major theme of emerald, ruby, or lilac-blue, around which there is rose melting into violet, blue into shimmering green, with a pearly atmosphere, giving an effect of deep quietude, dignity, serenity, majesty, peace. In everything he painted there is a more convincing massiveness, and a more powerful three-dimensional rhythm. The means he adapted to this end is a swirl not unlike that of Rubens, but of larger scope and much more moving. Color becomes paramount—it indicates perspective, suffuses the whole painting, increases the contrapuntal richness of forms, welds the units together into a rich and powerful design. He left his preceptors constantly further behind, and attained by his own technique to much of the classic spirit of the best Renaissance painting. This classic spirit becomes increasingly evident towards the end of his

life, and shows how profoundly he had assimilated and lent new life to all the valuable influences in art. More than that of any other painter his work constitutes an epitome and rounding-out of the whole history of painting.

We may now summarize Renoir's characteristics as they appear in all periods of his work. The foundation of his painting is color as it came from Fragonard and Rubens, and through Rubens from the Venetians. In the use of color he was an impressionist, though he transcended everything in that technique which is suggestive of formula or mannerism. It is not only in the use of color that he advances upon Rubens and Fragonard, for his spirit is essentially different. There is at all times in Rubens's and Fragonard's work a kind of remoteness and, in consequence, loss of perfect reality. In Rubens, this took the form of the flamboyant, the grandiose; in Fragonard, of triviality, of artificiality. Renoir's debt to the Dutch, to Velasquez, and to the realists, Courbet and Manet, of his own century, is evidenced by his much greater interest in the things of everyday life. His temperament made him love and observe attentively the commonplace people and incidents of life, so that in his hands they cease to be commonplace and become suffused with poetic charm. He is at home with them and he delights in enveloping them with the wealth of sensuous quality, the voluptuousness, that came from his own rich endowment.

His delight is that of an artist, not of an animal, for his voluptuousness is free from sensuality. He has an unerring grasp upon essentials; hence the truth and naturalness of his drawing, the success with which he makes his people reveal themselves in the performance of some ordinary act, such as taking hold of a cup or

handling a needle, or in the unpremeditated play of their features. His sense of the dramatic in the events of everyday life is comparable to that of Degas, but unlike him Renoir never despises the people whom he shows acting. His pleasure in the beautiful things of the world is revealed in the richness and delicacy of his textiles and in his rendering of human beings pulsating with life and glad to be alive.

The sensuous charm and the general decorative quality of Renoir's work is achieved by color-chords of a wealth nowhere else paralleled. In Rubens the color is less brilliant and less real, and he lacked the characteristically French delicacy of Renoir, which refined and made more subtle the elements of decoration. In Renoir, everything is fluid, light, transparent; the flesh is luminous, the atmosphere is pearly; when the surfaces are hard, their color is jewel-like. In his work, vulgar scenes and persons lose their vulgarity. A group of them, seen as an ensemble, resembles the flowers in a bouquet. His nudes are symbols, not naked women. Nobody ever painted more spontaneously, freely, with more improvisation, than he did.

All this decorative quality is not purchased at the expense of form, of reality, for his rich, juicy, varied, glowing color is also structural and compositional. It functions in design, reinforces drawing and perspective, and heightens the rhythms of the picture. His line is not only rhythmic but is as expressive of the character of personality, of drama, as is Degas's. He can give the grandeur and majesty of landscape in a degree comparable to Claude's, and he advances upon Claude in that he secured these effects by means of color. In landscape on a smaller scale he rivaled Constable, and in his sense of the *intime* quality of interiors he is the equal of Chardin. He has the poetry of Giorgione,

but it is a more homely poetry, less Arcadian, with less of the pathos of distance.

His weaknesses spring from the same source as his strength—his absorption in the life that is visible to the eye, his unreflectiveness, his incomparable sensuous charm. He has not the impersonality or quite the subtlety of Velasquez, nor the supreme economy of means, the restraint, the poignancy of human values, the mysticism of Rembrandt. He is less imaginative than Giorgione, less elevated than Titian, less dramatic than Tintoretto, less powerful than Michel Angelo or Cézanne, and less completely absorbed in the essential, to the neglect of all secondary matters, than Giotto. But purely as a plastic artist, he has greater command of means, greater variety of effect, and certainly a greater decorative quality than any other painter.

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### Cézanne

CÉZANNE (1839-1906) began working at the time when impressionism was at its height, and the influences upon him were in large measure the same as the influences upon Renoir. Both men were impressionists in their technique and remained impressionists throughout their careers, even though each used the method in a distinctive and individual way. Both Renoir and Cézanne were deeply influenced by Delacroix and Courbet. The first, but only fleeting, influence of Delacroix is seen in the romantic, dramatic subject-matter in Cézanne's earliest paintings. The profound lesson which he learned from Delacroix, and which lasted all his life, was the great effects obtainable from the structural and organic use of color. From Courbet he absorbed the simplifications and vigorous painting of

naturalistic objects, which, combined with the later influences of Michel Angelo, El Greco and Pissarro, determined the form taken by his whole-hearted devotion to the construction of relatively abstract design.

The early influence of Pissarro upon him was so strong that the first impressionist paintings by Cézanne could almost pass for Pissarro's of extraordinary vigor. He took over his entire technique—quality and kind of color, its use in juxtaposed spots varied with broad areas of color, and his manner of using light. His grasp of fundamentals, and his ability to form original and powerful designs, seem to have been innate, for they appear in his earliest work, long before he had developed his final and characteristic form. Consequently, his use of Pissarro's method resulted in paintings that were stronger than Pissarro's own, more solid, better organized by means of color. His better sense of line, color, mass and space in their purely plastic function makes a form stronger than that of any of his contemporary impressionists.

Cézanne's evolution into his own distinctive technique was a slow process because he was deficient in natural facility in the use of the brush. From the first he was clearly an independent artist, but it was a long time before he could paint with the assurance of Renoir, and his early work lacks the finish and mastery of medium which is to be seen in Renoir from the start. The sense of effort and strain remains even in his mature style, which never attains to Renoir's unconscious ease and naturalness. Although Renoir's painting also represents a gradual progress toward his final form, his early pictures are much more complete in themselves than Cézanne's and do not so clearly represent experimental and tentative stages.

During the course of Cézanne's experimentation the



impressionistic technique is always much in evidence. The interest in color, the use of light to vivify the color in selected spots and also as a general illumination, are unmistakably in the impressionistic manner. But even before he had attained a degree of skill in the use of paint equal to Pissarro's, there is a noticeable advance in the dynamic power of the color in the design, and in its use to produce more convincing effects of three-dimensional reality.

His progress towards the use of a thinner impasto resulted in an increasing ability to render the effects of solidity in terms free from the sculptural tendency of his earlier thick paint. This thinner paint transformed the roughness of effect in his early work to a lightness and delicacy that involves no loss of strength. As his style becomes more characteristically his own, the ability to compose in terms of deep space increases, with great heightening of conviction and moving power. At the same time, there is a softening of contours. His line rarely becomes blurred as in Renoir, but it loses its earlier tendency to hardness and comparative isolation from the other elements, and comes to be realized more intimately in union with light and color, especially color. His composition departs from conventionality and flows rhythmically throughout the whole of the canvas. The shapes of the objects become less naturalistic and more arbitrarily subordinated to the requirements of design. This tendency to distortion of shape has always been the quality in Cézanne which aroused the scornful wonder of the inexperienced observer, and is chiefly responsible for the effort which is required to appreciate his painting at all. He has none of the charm which Renoir has for the superficial observer. Such an observer does not, of course, see the essential plastic virtues of Renoir, but



he does see an immediately pleasing lyric quality, while in Cézanne he is likely to see nothing familiar.

Cézanne can be appreciated only after all considerations of naturalistic accuracy have been dismissed. His distinctive achievement was to establish a series of relationships in deep space between solid three-dimensional objects, so that their ensemble is a unified plastic design of great aesthetic power. This feeling for the dynamic relationships between objects and the ability to coördinate the resulting forms into a design involved a specific genius, which in the period of his maturity resulted in designs as original and as moving as those of Giotto. To achieve these designs he violated all conceptions of probability or possibility. Objects appear suspended in the air, in complete defiance of the law of gravitation, figures and faces are distorted into monstrosities. Both color and outline are treated as motives to be worked with as design requires, and in no sense as requirements laid down by the actual appearance of things in the real world. These distortions are to be found not only in the faces and other parts of the human body, but also in all the plastic means, including line, mass, space: they are fundamental to the planes themselves. These planes are changed from the normal in every conceivable way, and the new forms are built up by the interpenetration of these distorted planes, which represent the most basic plastic debt of Cézanne to El Greco. In all of his work there is a perceptible, a definite idea, which he himself called the *motif*. Naturalistic considerations in the representation of subject-matter were sacrificed to the desire to make lines, perspective and space so fuse in planes of color that all the elements come into equilibrium. In other words, objects, deprived of their resemblance

to real things, were merely the means used to integrate the plastic elements into new and distinctive forms.

The essential material for all his forms was color, and he built everything up out of color. His modeling is done by layers of modulated colors and not by the usual method of variations of the same color to indicate the gradations of light by which in nature the curving surface of a solid body is shown. Cézanne used strokes of color, which give the essential effect of solidity, but in a form far removed from that of nature. The result is a richer plastic effect, with no loss of conviction. In modeling he also used light in the usual way as an additional means; but color in layers is the essential characteristic, is distinctively his own method, and it shows the thoroughness with which he carried out his intention to utilize the prime material of painting, color, to the greatest possible extent. His manner of using color represents an originality and an economy of means comparable to Rembrandt's, and is perhaps even better than Rembrandt's, because color is in itself richer than chiaroscuro, it has more possibilities, and is more distinctively *the* material in the medium of painting. In the achievement of subtle effects by means of color he rivals Velasquez, though he was by far the lesser craftsman. He raises the functional quality of color to its supreme degree, and thus carries the Venetian tradition to its consummation. Perspective, drawing, composition, and the creation of solid structure are all done chiefly by color. Even in his distortions, the line is either color itself or is so merged with color in a moving formal relation to adjacent colors as to make the drawing more powerful. The distorted planes in his best work consist of an equilibrium of colors fused into new forms which

are Cézanne's very own. In these, color enters into fluid, rhythmic relations with all the other plastic elements, and organizes the painting by means of distinctive forms. This rhythmic interplay of color-forms is Cézanne's great achievement, and was never realized better by any other artist. Color animates everything, without any recourse to the moving power of illustration.

Cézanne's forms are essentially abstract, but they are achieved through the medium of subject-matter that has sufficient point of contact with the real world to establish relation with our funded experience of real things. For example, the hands in the "Portrait of Madame Cézanne"<sup>3</sup> are obviously distorted and unnatural, but they recall human hands, in their essential and abstract quality, with a forceful, moving reality greater than any photographic imitation of hands could produce. In this power to give the feeling of the real while avoiding all literal realism, Cézanne vies with Rembrandt and Velasquez, in whose paintings there is the same realism without photography. More than either of those painters, Cézanne stripped away everything not absolutely essential, and through new technical means succeeded in giving that sense of profound fidelity to the deeper aspects of things, which is the characteristic of all great art.

Cézanne ranks with the greatest painters of all ages because, by the use of means purely plastic and by a new use of the most difficult of those means—color—he realized a form of the highest conviction and power. In his elimination of everything not entirely necessary to design, he followed in the footsteps of Michel Angelo, Tintoretto and El Greco, whose distortions he applied to new purposes. From Velasquez, through

<sup>3</sup> The Barnes Foundation Collection.

the intermediation of Manet, he learned to simplify. But in him the whole tradition of simplification and distortion was merged with the impressionistic technique and became something radically new in the history of painting. His power is equal to Michel Angelo's, and is more effective because it is achieved by means entirely intrinsic to painting, instead of the suggestions derived from sculpture to be found even in the best of Michel Angelo's work. His landscapes have the majesty of Claude's, combined with a more austere, rugged force; they have an added purity because he dispenses with anything of even the degree of obviousness of Claude's atmosphere. His perception of the significant enables him to put into a simple still-life a monumental quality that makes Raphael's "Transfiguration" seem trivial.

Cézanne's shortcomings arise partly from the same source as his greatness and partly from his never wholly perfect command of his medium. As a painter he never rises to the greatest heights, those of Velasquez, Rembrandt or Renoir. Cézanne's laborious efforts to force and coax paint to express his ideas and feelings are perceptible at all stages of his work. Even in his most mature paintings he sometimes lacked that command over paint which makes it seem that an artist can execute without apparent effort, which is the mark of the supreme craftsman. Another disadvantage is that his resolute adherence to essentials left him comparatively little interest in the sensuous charm that accompanies a specific decorative quality. In this respect he is inferior to all the greater Venetians, to Velasquez, to Renoir, and even to Rubens. This does not mean that his surfaces are at all bleak or barren, but there is not the wealth of decorative quality throughout every area of his pictures that there is, for

example, in Giorgione's. In Renoir there is a similar, powerfully plastic form made up of solid masses rhythmically arranged in deep space, but in addition we have a greater variety and richness of color-chords and a more ingratiating charm, such as exists in Giorgione and Titian. The examples of these artists also show that it is possible to have strength of plastic form in combination with a greater variety of human values than Cézanne presents to us, so that his purification of plastic form is not attained without loss. This defect is offset to a certain extent by the sensuous richness of the plastic forms themselves, in which the color is deeply integrated.

He was the equal of the greatest artists in making his forms embody the abstract feelings, the human values, that the objects and events of everyday life communicate. He rendered the essential qualities of those feelings stripped of the irrelevant and accidental, and endowed them with the pervasive mystery, power and charm that make them moving, vital and beautiful.

# The Evolution of Contemporary Painting<sup>1</sup>

By ALBERT C. BARNES

THE distinctive note in the painting of our own day is the development of interest in design as something comparatively independent of the ostensible subject of the painting. Almost all modern painting shows the influence of impressionism, especially as that movement was shaped and brought to its consummation by Renoir and Cézanne. In the work of both of these artists, the interest in achieving design primarily through the medium of color is paramount, but the interest in color takes a different form in the two men. Renoir's color is more varied, brighter, more sensuously charming and more decorative. In Cézanne it is more restrained and is used more in the interest of solidity or mass. But in both artists it assumes throughout the canvas a functional power to effect composition in a degree unequaled in the history of painting. The emphasis of color as the most potent of all the instruments of design is thus due to the researches of these two men.

In the evolution of their techniques, Renoir and Cézanne adopted methods that came from the Venetians, Velasquez, Hals, Rubens, Goya, Delacroix and Courbet, through Manet's simplifications and generalizations. These latter were achieved principally by the broad brush-strokes that enabled Manet to give

<sup>1</sup> From *The Art in Painting* by Albert C. Barnes: Harcourt, Brace and Co.

the essential quality of things, stripped of adventitious matter, and in a form that added a new note to general design. The concentration on the essential visible reality, which was the distinctive contribution of Velasquez, was thus revived and made a part of the living tradition of the time. It still further assisted in the work of making an independent non-naturalistic design, which should also reveal penetratingly the nature of things. Manet's method of using his brush had comparatively little direct influence upon Renoir and Cézanne, but Manet's contribution as a whole was in solution in most of the painting of the time, and it constantly reappears in the work of subsequent painters. With Renoir and Cézanne, impressionistic painting constituted the point of departure. In them, impressionism was further fertilized by all the great traditions of the past, and, taken together, they represent the highest development of plastic form. Simplification and distortion are more obvious in Cézanne's work than in Renoir's, and this fact has led to the erroneous view, at present much in vogue among superficial critics, that Cézanne represents a stage further in advance than Renoir in the progress toward the goal of a pure art.

The art of painting as it emerges from the hands of Renoir and Cézanne has in its possession as never before two all-important principles. First, the principle of pure design, embodying the values of human experience but not tied down to a literal reproduction of the situations in which these values are found in ordinary life. Second, the principle of color as the most essential of all the plastic elements, the means almost entirely intrinsic to the medium of paint. This latter principle means, pragmatically, that effects of mass, composition, space, drawing, are most moving aestheti-



cally when rendered in terms of color. Upon this foundation rests all that is truly significant and important in contemporary art.

Factors contributing to the development of modern design are found also in the work of Gauguin and van Gogh. Other very important sources of inspiration are Negro sculpture, in the case of Picasso, Modigliani and Soutine; and the art of Persia, India, China and Japan, in the case of Matisse and his disciples.

In Gauguin there reappear the broad areas of color which are to be found in Manet, but with a different effect. The areas are broader, more purely decorative and do not show Manet's characteristic modification by perceptible brushwork. In Manet the design is intended much more to render the essential natural quality of what is depicted, while in Gauguin the forms are less expressive and they function more obviously as means to a design which is much more nearly mere pattern. This undoubtedly makes Gauguin a less important artist, but it also made his pictures fertile in suggestions for the painters who followed him. In Gauguin's general exotic quality and in his unusual color-contrasts, there is an anticipation of the color-scheme which was later used with more subtlety, variety and power by Matisse.

In van Gogh, we see the exaggeration of the color-division of the impressionists into long, narrow, ribbonlike streaks of color which give a general animation to the canvas and brightness to the color itself, in addition to making a specific design in which line and color fuse. In this respect, van Gogh's painting is more expressive, less merely decorative, than Gauguin's; but a similar step is taken towards the isolation of design, and the decorative motive is also present. The strikingly unnatural shades of color and the distortions of

line and mass are steps in the same direction, and these, together with the other characteristics of van Gogh's painting, have been utilized freely by contemporary painters.

Negro sculpture has enriched contemporary painting to such an extent that a brief discussion of it is necessary. In the early periods of Greek sculpture figures were conceived as combinations of back, front and side bas-reliefs. The achievement of complete plastic freedom was a late exploit, which arrived after the great period of Greek sculpture had passed. It was at all times complicated by the motive of representation, so that the arrangement of masses, of head, trunk and limbs, which would have made the most effective plastic ensemble, was rarely found. Literature, in other words, stood in the way of plastic form. With Negro sculpture, the literary motive was absent and the artist strove to distribute his masses in accord with the requirements of a truly sculptural design. There is no suggestion of the bas-relief; the figures are three-dimensional through and through. Its freedom from anything adventitious or meaningless gives Negro art a sculptural quality purer than that of the best Greek periods and also of Renaissance sculpture, which is Greek in a modern guise. In this respect, Negro sculpture is quite the equal of Egyptian sculpture of the best periods.

Greek statues have had an enormous influence on the whole history of painting since the Renaissance, and the pictures in which this influence is most apparent, for example, those of Leonardo, represent in a double sense a mongrel art. They are imitations in painting of another art, and this other art is in itself hybrid, a cross between pure sculpture and flat representation.

Hence the confusion of values in Leonardo and all who showed the influence of his example. This confusion was not incompatible with considerable achievement, but it has unduly limited the range of possible plastic effects.

Negro art, in exhibiting a form which is in the fullest sense sculptural, has enforced a sharper distinction between the possibilities inherent in painting and sculpture, respectively, and it has also put at the disposal of painting a new source of inspiration. It is not a confusion of values that a painter should find inspiration in another art: the confusion arises when he directly imitates the methods of that art. Leonardo's solid forms are such an imitation, but the use of Negro *motifs* in the work of Matisse, Modigliani or Soutine is not. The latter do not attempt to realize the three-dimensional qualities of Negro statues: what is taken over is rendered in the terms proper to painting, and so has nothing of the mongrel quality which is to be found in the contemporary revivals of Renaissance art. Matisse, Soutine and Modigliani render the essential feeling, the spirit of Negro art, and give it force in a new setting. The result is a very moving plastic form of which nothing in the previous history of painting is an anticipation.

In 1904 a group of Cézanne's followers established in Paris the *Salon d'Automne* and stimulated a public interest which has relegated academic painting to an insignificant place in cultivated French life. A second and more liberal salon, the *Indépendents*, which was started a few years later, showed other important influences besides those of Cézanne. A third, the *Salon des Tuileries*, still more comprehensive in its influences,

had its first successful exhibition in 1923. These three salons have determined all that is vital and important in contemporary painting throughout the world.

What interested the insurgents of twenty years ago was Cézanne's development of a form that had freed itself to an unheard-of extent from the representative values of subject-matter. The foundation of his form was the impressionists' practice of using color regardless of the natural tones of the objects portrayed: color combined with light was distributed all over the canvas so that a homogeneous color-mass replaced the old-fashioned representation of foreground, middle-distance and background. The method resulted in relatively flat painting and made color function in tying the compositional units together into an organic whole. It achieved, by a different method, an approach to the color-power which only a few great artists of the past, the Venetians, Rubens, Poussin, Delacroix, had possessed.

Cézanne's treatment of subject-matter led some of his followers to believe that painting could be purified and refined into abstract forms by abolishing all representation of natural objects. Picasso went to the extreme of conceiving objects as a series of planes and he painted these planes so that only sections of objects were visible in angular and cubic shapes. The practice spread rapidly and was defended by a system of absurd psychological and metaphysical doctrines that impressed unreflecting painters and critics. A clever London newspaper-writer, Mr. Clive Bell, surrounded the cubists' doctrine with a quasi-scientific set of high-sounding but meaningless statements in a book that served its propagandic purpose in good journalistic fashion. Mr. Bell's successful *coup* in thus giving currency to counterfeit thinking and counterfeit art

was a circus performance which the late P. T. Barnum would have respected.<sup>2</sup>

Sufficient time has passed to view cubism in retrospect and to evaluate it as an art-form and as an influence. Picasso and Braque put considerable aesthetic power into cubistic paintings, but it is doubtful if that power is not due to something independent of both the principles and the technique. The idea of abstract form divorced from a clue, however vague, of its representative equivalent in the real world is sheer nonsense. In cubistic paintings that move us aesthetically there are always sufficient representative indications, as well as reliance upon other and traditional resources of painting, to stir up something familiar in our mass of funded experience. In these cases, the cubist technique functions psychologically precisely as do the distortions of El Greco, Renoir and Cézanne; that is, the representative element in all of those distortions contributes to the total effect. The nearest a purely cubist painting ever gets to the aesthetic forms that make up a complete painting is good composition and novel color-forms, and those elements are never sufficient to constitute a satisfactory painting. The very great majority of cubistic paintings have no more aesthetic significance than the pleasing pattern in an Oriental rug.

A more important and constructive influence that came from the insurgent group in France is that of Matisse. He was never tempted to seek the metaphysical abstract that led Picasso out of the paths of the great traditions of painting. Matisse, like Cézanne, has always been interested in the real world as the source of a plastic instrument that would enable him to recombine selected aspects or phases of human

<sup>2</sup> See also *Pattern and Plastic Form* by Laurence Buermeier, p. 92.

experience into a form which was something new, a thing in itself, with its own independent existence. He began with using certain technical devices, which Cézanne invented, and he carried them to further extremes in making them constructive factors in a new design. Subject-matter was minimized: it was merely the foundation-stone upon which to build lines of extraordinary plastic power, and color of unusual compositional significance. In other words, Matisse followed Renoir's and Cézanne's practice in creating plastic forms of structural integrity. Where Picasso abstracted an element in a situation, Matisse dealt with the whole situation as it exists in reality. The error in Picasso's cubistic excursions is that he ignores the fundamental psychological fact that *continuity* is the essential feature of perception. It is as absurd to say that planes or sections of cubes represent the reality of objects as—to quote an observation of William James—to contend that our perception of a river is of spoonfuls or bucketfuls of water. In short, Picasso dealt with irrational abstractions that led him into a *cul-de-sac*, while Matisse dealt with concrete realities that expand continually into unlimited fields.

The tendency in present-day painting is away from the abstract and toward the utilization of situations of everyday life as a means of individual expression of universal human values. The impressionism of Claude Monet is scarcely in evidence, but the influences of Renoir, Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, and Matisse, all of whom had their origins in impressionism, are almost universal in one or more of their phases. To these influences have been added the decorations and distortions found in the arts of India and Persia, and especially in Negro sculpture. Certain practices of cubism, for example, the interpenetration and accentu-



ation of planes, have been generalized in the new manner of emphasizing spatial relations of naturalistic objects in the composition. The primitive element which Rousseau le Douanier adapted to new ends is also apparent in the work of some of the contemporaries. These various influences have determined the exotic, the distorted, the primitive effects which have stirred the wrath of our fetish-worshipping academicians. What they have urged against contemporary paintings is duplicated in every essential point in what their prototypes of 1875 published about many paintings now considered to be among the best in the Louvre.

The canvases of the contemporary painters are filled with units actively constructive in the general design, and all the plastic elements are distorted for obviously specific purposes. The fresh and bright colors which cubism tabooed are almost universal, though there is little or no literal rendering of the natural colors of objects. Color, distributed all over the canvas, composes the painting; it replaces foreground, middle-distance and background with a homogeneous color-mass that makes perspective itself chiefly color. The general tendency is to sacrifice everything toward the achievement of design. Decoration is rampant and so are obvious human values, as is inevitable when painting is expressive and when its subject-matter is the objects and events of the real world. Nothing of the importance or significance of Renoir or Cézanne has appeared, although several men have shown a form in process of development that may reach the importance and strength of the best of Picasso and Matisse.



# Primitive Negro Sculpture and Modern Art<sup>1</sup>

By PAUL GUILLAUME

TWENTY years ago, it seemed as though modern art had exhausted its energies, and was dying of a slow anaemia. The inspiration and vitality of impressionism were gone: Cézanne had just died and Renoir, an old man, was the last of a generation which seemed to be without successors. Picasso and Matisse had revealed their talent, but neither had yet come into his own. Some new motive, some fructifying conception, was needed if either was to bring his powers into full exercise. On every side one was conscious of energies unused, unorganized, awaiting some formative influence which they were not able to create for themselves. Then, as by a miracle, the art of a remote, misunderstood and despised era appeared above the horizon, and all was changed. In a time incredibly brief the pent-up energies were released, a new and intense vitality appeared in all realms of aesthetic endeavor, and European art, which had appeared to be withering, bloomed once more.

The start of the movement, as is the case with every work that counts, was extremely modest, and the sympathetic public formed itself gradually. For a time the consciousness of Negro art was confined to the leaders of thought and feeling, the pioneers. The

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Primitive Negro Sculpture* by Paul Guillaume and Thomas Munro: Harcourt, Brace and Co. Price, \$6.00.

mass of people knew it only at second-hand, and had no idea, when they delighted in the brilliant decoration of the Russian Ballet, or felt the throbbing rhythms of Stravinsky, or were warmed by the new vitality in the poetry of their contemporaries, that so much of this life-giving art was born in tropical jungles many centuries ago. But soon people grew anxious to drink from this spring at its source. The world quickly learned of the vast and unsuspected wealth of spiritual inspiration bequeathed to modern times by unnamed artists of the black race, artists to whom it was then eager to do homage. By 1910 the enthusiasm, the joy of the painters, their fever of excitement, made it apparent that a new renaissance had taken place. Not less evident was it that the honor of this renaissance belonged to Negro art. In the work of Picasso there was a whole epoch named the "Negro epoch"; there was an entire literature, a whole school of music named after the Negroes.

It may be said without fear of exaggeration that the best of what has developed in contemporary art during the past twenty years owes its original inspiration to primitive Negro sculpture. This is of course particularly obvious in the plastic arts, not only in the sculpture of Lipchitz and other leaders, but in the field of painting, where Picasso, Matisse, Modigliani and Soutine—acknowledged as determining influences among the younger men—have taken over the Negro motive with creative modifications. Less obvious but equally real has been the effect upon other arts. The music of the French group known as the Six—Satie, Auric, Honegger, Milhaud, Poulenc and Tailleferre—has embodied the ancient Negro spirit in musical forms along with a high degree of European musical culture. Much of Stravinsky's work, and of the Rus-

sian ballet under Diaghlieff, owes its inspiration to African sources in conjunction with the traditions of Russian music and dancing. Architects such as the Perret brothers and Jeanneret, poets and prose writers such as Guillaume Apollinaire, Jean Cocteau, Max Jacob, Blaise Cendrars and Reverdy (all early supporters of the movement) reveal and in most cases have explicitly acknowledged the fundamentally Negro character of their work as to emotional content and formal expression. In the great Exposition of Decorative Arts at Paris in 1925, the predominance of the Negro motive was evident among the really new and distinctive notes in decoration. Tendencies in the designing of contemporary furniture, posters and journalistic advertising attest the spread of this motive to every domain of fine and applied art. Nor is this influence confined to the literal and slavish copying of Negro patterns or their simple translation into another medium: this has occurred, as may always be expected from non-creative workmen who exploit the superficial aspects of every newly discovered artistic resource; but the more significant lines of influence have been a clearer understanding of the nature of design in any medium, and in particular the applicability of the principles of Negro sculpture to a revivifying of artistic traditions that had been thought dead. One may almost say that there is a form of feeling, an architecture of thought, a subtle expression of the most profound forces of life, which have been extracted from Negro civilization and infused in the modern world of art.

The spread of Negro sculpture to world-wide popularity has led to the danger that it may be taken up by some as a fad, and appreciated only for a few bizarre and superficial details, while its qualities of fundamen-

tal plastic importance pass unnoticed. This danger is as usual aggravated by the many books and magazine articles which profess to explain and criticize the newly discovered art, but do so on irrelevant and misleading grounds, providing unnecessary facts about the anthropological associations of the carvings, or appealing to the popular love of daydreaming about the savage life of the tropics. Hence there is a constant and increasing need for correctives to this misinterpretation, and for a succinct reminder of what essential artistic qualities to look for in Negro sculpture.

People brought up, as most of us are, to see and admire only the Greek style of sculpture and its modern descendants, have naturally formed the habit of expecting to see its qualities in any statue which makes a claim to artistic importance. In looking at a Negro statue, then, they are apt to be disappointed at not finding these Greek qualities, such as physical beauty and grace, or else the animated posture and facial expression which modern academic sculptors emphasize. They find no interesting story, moral or intellectual ideal, but instead what seems like grotesque deformity and distortion of the human face and body.

What such persons do not see, and need some conscious effort and assistance to see, is that by means of these distortions there is produced a design. In fact, the very idea that in sculpture there exists such a thing as design comes to many otherwise well-educated people as a new discovery, although it had been a familiar enough conception as applied to wall-paper, rugs, and even to certain pictures. But it takes little knowledge of aesthetics to realize that whatever materials an artist uses, he can so select and arrange them as to produce a repetition of certain distinct themes, that different themes can be contrasted, varied and har-

moniously inter-related so as to form a unified whole. In music, the artist uses melodies and chord-progressions; in poetry, certain metres, rhymes, and recurrent ideas; in painting, certain distinctive lines, colors, spaces and areas of light and dark. What sort of themes, then, can the sculptor use? He has at his disposal solid masses of stone, wood, or other materials, which like the architect he can shape and combine in an infinity of different ways. These masses have various qualities of surface, rough or smooth, dead white as in plaster or variously tinted, and over them light and shadow play, to further diversify the surface and to accentuate hollows and projections. Each mass, too, has its linear contour and in addition such other lines as may be formed by the meeting of planes, the ridging and grooving of the surface. From these raw materials the creative sculptor selects one or more characteristic themes, repeats them so as to gain the effect of a rhythmic sequence as in music, varies and contrasts them so as to avoid monotony, and weaves them together into an organic, ordered form.

Beside fitting thus into a design, each configuration may of course resemble and represent some object in the world of nature; the arrangement of approximately cylindrical masses with a round mass at the top may suggest to us the human body, and further naturalistic details may be added to portray a definite character and situation in life. In a given statue, both these means of interesting the observer, design and representation, may be so combined as to produce a still harmonious though more complex unity; the design, we may say, is appropriate to the subject, and the subject is expressed in good plastic terms. On the other hand, a statue may be combined of masses which form a pleasing design and yet resemble nothing

definite in nature, be an abstract form like a wall-paper pattern. Or, again, it may represent in every detail a certain man as faithfully as if a plaster cast had been made of him, yet be practically lacking in design. In fact, the nearer it comes to exact representation the more difficult it will be to arrange all the multiplicity of specifications set by nature and dress into an orderly arrangement of recurrent shapes. The more the artist omits watch-chains, button-holes and facial peculiarities, the more chance he has of bringing into evidence a few main repetitions of line and mass.

By poising the limbs this way and that, by clothing the figure in simple drapery with swirling or vertical folds, he may produce certain effects of rhythm and balance. This amount of design the great Greek and Renaissance sculptors achieved, in addition to representing physical, moral and religious types. Their interest was so predominantly in this latter problem, however, that design tended to suffer by comparison more and more as sculpture "progressed" away from the archaic. Along with variation in subject-matter, there was repetition of a few graceful curves and delicate surfaces, charming in themselves but not sufficient to hold the attention forever, or to constitute (except in rare instances) a strongly unified design. Yet academic sculptors have copied these few Greek conventions *ad infinitum*, instead of facing the problem of creation in design.

The essential reason for the interest of modern artists in ancient Egyptian, Chinese, Hindu and Polynesian sculpture, as well as in that of the Negro, lies not in the exotic subjects represented, but in the fact that these early traditions emphasize design rather than literal representation, and present effects of design, qualities of line and surface, arrangements of

mass, which are unknown in the Greek tradition. And wherever we find design strongly developed, there also we find more or less distortion of natural physical proportions; for the possibility of unusual and varied rhythmic repetitions is immediately and infinitely increased once it is granted that the artist may shorten, lengthen, thicken or bend a limb into observable similarity with some other part of the figure, or may freely transform natural proportions in the interest of plastic form.

Although distinctly not alone in practicing distortion, Negro sculpture does stand alone in respect to the freedom and inventiveness with which it transforms the body to achieve a wealth of striking rhythms. Not only graceful spiral curves and glossy surfaces, but every imaginable variation of the cylinder, sphere and cube; lines spiral, straight and angular; planes gently undulating, harshly projecting, rough, polished, grooved and ridged into surface patterns. Depending in part on the tribal convention and in part on the genius of the individual artist, the human face and form tend to be angular and elongated (as in the Sudan), bulbous (as in the Gabun region) or treated with fine surface decoration along with underlying strength (as in the Ivory Coast).

This strong basic structure of masses is present to a high degree in all the typical works of Negro sculpture, sometimes along with exterior ornamentation and sometimes in simple plainness. In late Greek and modern academic sculpture, on the other hand, it tends to be absent. Where these other schools are consequently weak in fundamentals, with delicate surfaces overlaying a vague and shapeless substructure, the typical Negro statue is conceived almost architecturally, of solid, definitely realized blocks placed so as to re-



veal their ability to stand of their own accord and support weight in a stable equilibrium. Such a statue has a satisfying quality of power and repose, expressing the qualities of the solid materials used. In addition, it makes possible the presentation of a different design from every point of view, as, in going around the statue, one sees constantly new rearrangements of the constituent masses. In a statue which is merely a bas-relief raised on a single surface, or even several of such bas-reliefs placed back to back, and loosely integrated, the fundamental shape is bound to be monotonous, and the surface design to seem shallow, unsubstantial, and unrelated to the sub-structure. With the single exception of the Egyptian, there is no school of sculpture which equals the Negro in the quality of vigorous three-dimensional solidity, and the variety of plastic forms achieved by the latter is much greater than in the Egyptian or any other school.

In consequence of the intimate connection between substructure and surface decoration, as well as of the pervasive rhythmic repetition of parts, there is produced in the best pieces of Negro sculpture an effect of all-inclusive unity and harmony, such as characterizes all works of art of the highest order. Every part is related to every other, and there are no loose ends, no discordant notes or irrelevant details; looking up, down and around, from general scheme to detail and back by way of subsidiary patterns, one sees only the few chosen themes, always recognizable in spite of surprising and novel variation; one exists for the moment in a single small harmonious world from which frustration and incompleteness have been removed.

But to what extent, it is often asked, can such high artistic accomplishments have been deliberately planned by ignorant savages of the jungle? Are the statues not

rather the results of mere aimless fumbling, and have not modern enthusiasts imagined most of what they claim to see in them? Such questions come almost always from people who have not seriously examined the original carvings, and who merely voice the common superciliousness of the civilized for all things primitive. A few moments' direct observation is sufficient to disclose that design in Negro sculpture is an objective and unquestionable fact, as demonstrable as that in a Gothic cathedral. Once this has been really discerned, it becomes impossible for an intelligent person to suppose that such complex organic unity, along with subtle and direct execution, could have been the result of unguided impulse. The Negro did not possess an abstract and explicit aesthetic theory, and could not have explained his work in the terms used above; social custom and spontaneous impulse did enter into his work, as into that of every artist. But these facts are by no means incompatible with a high degree of individual reflection and innovation, or with the control of workmanship in accordance with a definite artistic aim. The Negro artist knew what he was doing at every step, even though he could not have explained in abstract terms all the reasons for his preferences. Leading anthropologists, moreover, are rapidly departing from the dogma that the Negro is inferior in general intelligence, and are demonstrating from lines of evidence other than the artistic that his behavior, though different from ours, is in many respects at least as rational.

Another question often asked about Negro sculpture, and about modern art as well is, if the primary aim of the artist is design rather than representation, why does he not abandon the latter entirely, and build up a purely abstract form of lines, planes and masses,

thus sparing us the pain of seeing the human body distorted? There are several answers to this question. In the first place, the attempt has been made, by artists of many schools before the present day, of making designs in sculpture and other media which are almost or entirely devoid of definite representative significance. Many of these attempts are successful and interesting as far as they go. But complete abstraction involves a loss of the strong emotional and intellectual interest which attaches to objects in the world of experience, especially the human body, and an artist who can transform the body into some new and forceful design draws upon two powerful sources of appeal at once. The discomfort which people accustomed only to academic European art feel on seeing "distortion" is an effect which ceases in proportion as the need and function of distortion in design is grasped. Then a departure from natural proportions comes to seem not an ugly deformity analogous to actual physical ones, but an imaginative re-creation whose value and beauty lie in its own internal fitness, rather than in any comparison with a human model.

Historically, the reason why Negro sculpture is not abstract but partially (never literally) representative lies in the conditions under which it was made, its functions in the life of the tribe. These masks and figures had always a religious use and significance over and above any purely aesthetic appeal. Most of them were intended to represent or symbolize in a general way the tribal conception of the spirits worshipped; they personified superhuman or animal beings, and no abstract form could do this as well as a form which, though like no individual man or animal, yet recalled the general attributes of living beings. The masks were worn by the priest or witch-doctor in ceremonial

dances, with elaborate costumes of straw, cloth, beads and metal, all of which served to change the wearer into something mysterious and supernaturally powerful. The best of the statues were made to act as idols or fetishes, some for an individual household, some for the chief, and some to be worshipped by an entire tribe in a central place in the village. Some were portraits, more or less idealized, of past chiefs, whose souls were worshipped after their deaths. Always the statue, after it was carved, had to be made into a magical fetish by special rites, sometimes including the attachment of clay, nails or bits of cloth, after which it was supposed to become the temporary residence of some spirit of the forest, rain, sun, moon or of some animal regarded as particularly sacred.

The creation of Negro art is now a thing of the past, for the religious motives that inspired it and the tribal conditions which made it possible are gone. It was inseparably bound up with animism and ancestor-worship. The spread of Christianity and Mohammedanism has not only led to the wholesale destruction of the fetishes by missionaries, but has destroyed the fervent belief in their efficacy which called forth creative effort in fashioning them. The new social and economic conditions, moreover, which are brought about by the spread of large-scale plantation labor, have destroyed the possibility of leisurely, non-commercial devotion to creative art. It is true that natives in the more accessible centers, and European craftsmen as well, have learned of the new commercial value of Negro art, and are turning out wood and ivory carvings in great quantity for the foreign trade. But there is little force or originality among the craftsmen of the present, and to find representative pieces one must go at least as far as the early Nineteenth Century.

The genuinely ancient works, handed down with reverence from dates as far back as the Ninth Century and earlier, have become practically impossible to find, and those already in Europe or America are rarely released from private collections and museums. Whether or not the art will ever be revived with genuine power by the civilized Negro of the present day is a matter for hope and conjecture; his racial genius, long held down, is rising to fresh creation in music and literature and may find its way back to plastic art. But in the meantime the inspiration of his ancestors has passed to the outside world, where it is not only revolutionizing artistic methods and standards, but compelling respect for the Negro spirit as a source of vitality in a tired civilization.



*Section II*

ART EDUCATION





# Individuality and Experience<sup>1</sup>

BY JOHN DEWEY

THE interesting report of Dr. Munro<sup>2</sup> on the methods of picture-making employed in the classes of Professor Cizek in Vienna raises a question that has to be dealt with in every branch of instruction. The question develops in two directions, one suggested by his statement that it is impossible to exclude outside influences, and the other by his report that upon the whole the more original constructions are those of younger pupils, that older students seem gradually to lose interest, so that no prominent artist has been produced. The problem thus defined consists in the relation of individuality and its adequate development to the work and responsibilities of the teacher, representing accumulated experience of the past.

Unfortunately, the history of schools not only in art but in all lines shows a swing of the pendulum between extremes, though it must be admitted that the simile of the pendulum is not a good one, for the schools remain, most of them, most of the time, near one extreme, instead of swinging periodically and evenly between the two. Anyway, the two extremes are external imposition and dictation, and "free-expression." Revolt from the costly, nerve-taxing and inadequate results of mechanical control from without creates an

<sup>1</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, January, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> See article *Franz Cizek and the Free Expression Method* by Thomas Munro, p. 311.

enthusiasm for spontaneity and "development from within," as it is often phrased. It is found that children at first are then much happier in their work—anyone who has seen Cizek's class will testify to the wholesome air of cheerfulness, even of joy, which pervades the room—but gradually tend to become listless and finally bored, while there is an absence of cumulative, progressive development of power and of actual achievement in results. Then the pendulum swings back to regulation by the ideas, rules, and orders of someone else, who being maturer, better informed and more experienced is supposed to know what should be done and how to do it.

The metaphor of the pendulum is faulty in another respect. It seems to suggest that the solution lies in finding a mid-point between the two extremes which would be at rest. But what is really wanted is a change in the direction of movement. As a general proposition no one would deny that personal mental growth is furthered in any branch of human undertaking by contact with the accumulated and sifted experience of others in that line. No one would seriously propose that all future carpenters should be trained by actually starting with a clean sheet, wiping out everything that the past has discovered about mechanics, about tools and their uses and so on. It would not be thought likely that this knowledge would "cramp their style," limit their individuality, etc. But neither, on the other hand, have carpenters been formed by the methods often used in manual training shops where dinky tasks of a minute and technical nature are set, wholly independent of really making anything, having only specialized skill as their aim. As a rule carpenters are educated in their calling by working with others who have experience and skill, sharing in the simpler portions of

the real undertakings, assisting in ways which enable them to observe methods and to see what results they are adapted to accomplish.

Such learning is controlled by two great principles: one is participation in something inherently worth while, or undertaken on its own account; the other is perception of the relation of means to consequences. When these two conditions are met, a third consideration usually follows as a matter of course. Having had an experience of the meaning of certain technical processes and forms of skill there develops an interest in skill and "technique": the meaning of the result is "transferred" to the means of its attainment. Boys interested in base-ball as a game thus submit themselves voluntarily to continued practice in throwing, catching, batting, the separate elements of the game. Or boys, who get interested in the game of marbles, will practice to increase their skill in shooting and hitting. Just imagine, however, what would happen if they set these exercises as tasks in school, with no prior activity in the games and with no sense of what they were about or for, and without any such appeal to the social, or participating, impulses as takes place in games!

If we generalize from such a commonplace case as the education of artisans through their work, we may say that the customs, methods and *working* standards of the calling constitute a "tradition," and that initiation into the tradition is the means by which the powers of learners are released and directed. But we should also have to say that the urge or need of an individual to join in an undertaking is a necessary prerequisite of the tradition's being a factor in his personal growth in power and freedom; and also that he has to *see* on his own behalf and in his own way the relations between

means and methods employed and results achieved. Nobody else can see for him, and he can't see just by being "told," although the right kind of telling may guide his seeing and thus help him see what he needs to see. And if he has no impelling desire of his own to become a carpenter, if his interest in being one is perfunctory, if it is not an interest in *being* a carpenter at all, but only in getting a pecuniary reward by doing jobs, the tradition will never of course really enter into and integrate with his own powers. It will remain, then, a mere set of mechanical and more or less meaningless rules that he is obliged to follow if he is to hold his job and draw his pay.

Supposing, again, that our imaginary pupil works for and with a master carpenter who believes in only one kind of house with a fixed design, and his aim is not only to teach his apprentice to make just that one kind of house, but to accept it with all his soul, heart and mind as the only kind of house that should ever be built, the very type and standard model of all houses. Then it is easy to see that limitation of personal powers will surely result, not merely, moreover, limitation of technical skill, but, what is more important, of his powers of observation, imagination, judgment, and even his emotions, since his appreciations will be warped to conform to the one preferred style. The imaginary case illustrates what often happens when we pass from the education of artisans to that of artists. As a rule a carpenter has to keep more or less open; he is exposed to many demands and must be flexible enough to meet them. He is in no position to set up a final authority about ends and models and standards, no matter how expert he may be in methods and means. But an architect in distinction from a builder is likely to be an "authority"; he can dictate and lay down what

is right and wrong, and thus prescribe certain ends and proscribe others. Here is a case where tradition is not enhancing and liberating, but is restrictive and enslaving. If he has pupils, he is a "master" and not an advanced fellow worker; his students are disciples rather than learners. Tradition is no longer tradition but a fixed and absolute convention.

In short, the practical difficulty does not reside in any antagonism of methods and rules and results worked out in past experience to individual desire, capacity and freedom. It lies rather in the hard and narrow and, we may truly say, uneducated habits and attitudes of teachers who set up as authorities, as rulers and judges in Israel. As a matter of course they know that as bare individuals they are not "authorities" and will not be accepted by others as such. So they clothe themselves with some tradition as a mantle, and henceforth it is not just "I" who speaks, but some Lord speaks through me. The teacher then offers himself as the organ of the voice of a whole school, of a *finished* classic tradition, and arrogates to himself the prestige that comes from what he is the spokesman for. Suppression of the emotional and intellectual integrity of pupils is the result; their freedom is repressed and the growth of their own personalities stunted. But it is not because of any opposition between the wisdom and skill of the past and the individual capacities of learners; the trouble lies in the habits, standards and ideas of the teacher. It is analogous to another case. There is no inherent opposition between theory and practice; the former enlarges, releases and gives significance to the latter; while practice supplies theory with its materials and with the test and check which keeps it sincere and vital. But there is a whole lot of opposition between human beings who set themselves

up as practical and those who set themselves up as theorists, an irresolvable conflict because both have put themselves into a wrong position.

This suggests that the proponents of freedom are in a false position as well as the would-be masters and dictators. There is a present tendency in so-called advanced schools of educational thought (by no means confined to art classes like those of Cizek) to say, in effect, let us surround pupils with certain materials, tools, appliances, etc., and then let pupils respond to these things according to their own desires. Above all let us not suggest any end or plan to the students; let us not suggest to them what they shall do, for that is an unwarranted trespass upon their sacred intellectual individuality since the essence of such individuality is to set up ends and aims.

Now such a method is really stupid. For it attempts the impossible, which is always stupid; and it misconceives the conditions of independent thinking. There are a multitude of ways of reacting to surrounding conditions, and without some guidance from experience these reactions are almost sure to be casual, sporadic and ultimately fatiguing, accompanied by nervous strain. Since the teacher has presumably a greater background of experience, there is the same presumption of the right of a teacher to make suggestions as to what to do, as there is on the part of the head carpenter to suggest to apprentices something of what they are to do. Moreover, the theory literally carried out would be obliged to banish all artificial materials, tools and appliances. Being the product of the skill, thought and matured experience of others, they would also, by the theory, "interfere" with personal freedom.

Moreover, when the child proposes or suggests what to do, some consequence to be attained, whence is the



suggestion supposed to spring from? There is no spontaneous germination in the mental life. If he does not get the suggestion from the teacher, he gets it from somebody or something in the home or the street or from what some more vigorous fellow pupil is doing. Hence the chances are great of its being a passing and superficial suggestion, without much depth and range—in other words, not specially conducive to the developing of freedom. If the teacher is really a teacher, and not just a master or “authority,” he should know enough about his pupils, their needs, experiences, degrees of skill and knowledge, etc., to be able (not to dictate aims and plans) to share in a discussion regarding what is to be done and be as free to make suggestions as anyone else. (The implication that the teacher is the one and only person who has no “individuality” or “freedom” to “express” would be funny if it were not often so sad in its outworkings.) And his contribution, given the conditions stated, will presumably do more to getting something started which will really secure and increase the development of strictly individual capacities than will suggestions springing from uncontrolled haphazard sources.

The point is also worth dwelling upon, that the method of leaving the response entirely to pupils, the teacher supplying, in the language of the day, only the “stimuli,” misconceives the nature of thinking. Any so-called “end” or “aim” or “project” which the average immature person can suggest in advance is likely to be highly vague and unformed, a mere outline sketch, not a suggestion of a definite result or consequence but rather a gesture which roughly indicates a field within which activities might be carried on. It hardly represents thought at all: it is a suggestion.

The real intellectual shaping of the "end" or purpose comes during and because of the operations subsequently performed. This is as true of the suggestion which proceeds from the teacher as of those which "spontaneously" spring from the pupils, so that the former does not restrict thought. The advantage on the side of the teacher—if he or she has any business to be in that position—is the greater probability that it will be a suggestion which will permit and require thought in the subsequent activity which builds up a clear and organized conception of an end. There is no more fatal flaw in psychology than that which takes the original vague fore-feeling of some consequence to be realized as the equivalent of a *thought* of an end, a true purpose and directive plan. The thought of an end is strictly correlative to perception of means and methods. Only when, and as the latter becomes clear during the serial process of execution does the project and guiding aim and plan become evident and articulated. In the full sense of the word, a person becomes aware of what he wants to do and what he is about only when the work is actually complete.

The adjective "serial" is important in connection with the process of performance or execution. Each step forward, each "means" used, is a partial attainment of an "end." It makes clearer the character of that end, and hence suggests to an observing mind the next step to be taken, or the means and methods to be next employed. Originality and independence of thinking are therefore connected with the intervening process of execution rather than with the source of the initial suggestion. Indeed, genuinely fruitful and original suggestions are themselves usually the results of experience in the carrying out of undertakings. The "end" is not, in other words, an end or finality in

the literal sense, but is in turn the starting point of new desires, aims and plans. By means of the process the mind gets power to make suggestions which are significant. There is now a past experience from which they can spring with an increased probability of their being worth while and articulate.

It goes without saying that a teacher may interfere and impose alien standards and methods during the operation. But as we have previously seen, this is not because of bringing to bear the results of previous experience, but because the habits of the teacher are so narrow and fixed, his imagination and sympathies so limited, his own intellectual horizon so bounded, that he brings them to bear in a wrong way. The fuller and richer the experience of the teacher, the more adequate his own knowledge of "traditions," the more likely is he, given the attitude of participator instead of that of master, to use them in a liberating way.

Freedom or individuality, in short, is not an original possession or gift. It is something to be achieved, to be wrought out. Suggestions as to things which may advantageously be taken, as to skill, as to methods of operation, are indispensable conditions of its achievement. These by the nature of the case must come from a sympathetic and discriminating knowledge of what has been done in the past and how it has been done.

## Method and Design<sup>1</sup>

By ALBERT C. BARNES

IT is obvious that no method can be applied without experience and reflection, and that neither experience nor reflection is possible without method: the two elements in the situation are inseparable. The untrained observer of paintings does bring to them a method of observation, but it is the method of practical life, and that usually leads to the interpretation of pictures as what may be called congealed narrative. Mr. Clive Bell's book *Art* consists of a long-winded castigation of such interpretation in favor of what he calls "significant form"; however, "significant form" is never defined or analyzed, so that at the end of what amounts to an indefinite series of "don'ts" his reader is left totally at a loss for guidance as to what to look for. But, as Professor Dewey points out, intelligence means the use of definite ideas for the interpretation of experience, and this is as true of intelligent observation as of intelligent action.

The academician merely replaces the error of reading stories into pictures by the error of applying to them a set of technical dogmas, which substitutes mechanical rule for intelligent judgment. He speaks of color, of composition, of drawing, of modeling, as though there were set standards for these things, stand-

<sup>1</sup> From *The Art in Painting* by Albert C. Barnes: Harcourt, Brace and Co.

ards which can be applied with as little recourse to personal feeling as is required to measure a quart of water. The present method<sup>2</sup> is an attempt to supplant both the popular and the academic error by giving some intimation of how to look for plastic or "significant" form, and the criteria by which to judge it when it has been found.

We have seen that plastic form<sup>3</sup> is the synthesis of the plastic elements or means—color, light, line, space—in a rhythmic, unified whole. It *expresses* the painter's vision of some object or situation in which human values are realized: hence the first requirement of a great painter is that he should have something to say; and to have "something to say" is to have an eye for the essential human values that the world reveals. Judged by this test, Giotto, Masaccio, Piero della Francesca, Michel Angelo, Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto, El Greco, Rubens, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Claude, are all great artists. But what is essential to great art is that what is said must be something individual, for there is no great merit in repeating what someone else has already said. Academic and eclectic painters fail to qualify as artists because they are the purveyors of other men's ideas. Of course, there are degrees in originality. Raphael is inferior to Titian or Rembrandt in the depth or width of his individual vision, but he does much more to modify, unify, and give personal quality to what he took from other men than, for example, the Carracci. Poussin is of something less than first-rate individuality, but he was a great artist because of his ability to fuse traditions into a form never duplicated in the work of any of his predecessors. It is impossible to judge any painter without knowing

<sup>2</sup> As set forth in *The Art in Painting*.

<sup>3</sup> See *Plastic Form* by Albert C. Barnes, p. 73.

his sources, what he had to work with, and consequently in analyses of pictures such sources should be so far as possible indicated.

What an artist sees in the world that escapes others, is valuable as art only when he has a command of the means by which it can be put down. For example, the humanitarian interests of Millet or the scientific interests of Leonardo are not susceptible of being rendered satisfactorily in plastic terms. In science, solid mass is all-important, and color is a superficial aspect of things; but in the scale of values which prevails in painting, the relative importance of solidity is much less. Leonardo's primary interest was in science; his deficient interest in the qualities which lend themselves to a rendering in pictorial terms is reflected in his very unequal command of plastic resources, by his bad color, overemphasis on light, and dependence upon effects adventitious to painting, even semi-literary effects, such as the smile in "Mona Lisa."

The question of the degree of realization of each element which a given plastic form requires is so involved that it needs further illustration. The error most readily made is that when a particular element is not obviously accentuated in a picture, the painter is to be charged with a deficiency in it. For instance, in Piero della Francesca there is so little attempt to indicate movement realistically that the figures seem static, while in Rubens or Delacroix, the movement is very obvious; but that difference cannot be counted against Piero's art. Movement of a striking character, in a design so essentially detached and unemphatic as his, would be an incongruity. The same principle applies to Rembrandt and Monet in the question of color. Monet's canvases have more numerous and brighter colors than Rembrandt's, but Monet is not therefore a

greater colorist. Rembrandt's design commits him to a comparatively subdued use of color, but the color functions so powerfully that the restraint effects a stronger unity of design than Monet ever achieved. Raphael is sometimes spoken of as the greatest of all masters of composition, but that is merely because his effects of grouping are so obvious that they cannot be overlooked. The simple composition of Rembrandt's "Unmerciful Servant" represents a more effective grasp of spatial relationships and their moving power than anything in Raphael. The sense of a wide expanse would be incongruous in Rembrandt's design; instead, there is, within a small compass, a perfect sense of roominess, with no space gone to waste, none without its own interest and value.

The same principle may be illustrated if we compare Botticelli with Renoir. The elaborate arabesques and linear rhythms of Botticelli may seem an element of appeal which is lacking in Renoir; but as soon as we consider integration into a total form as the touchstone of aesthetic value, we see that Renoir was a far greater draughtsman than Botticelli. His expressive line, constructed of color and light, fits perfectly into his form and not only gives a convincing representation of shape and movement, but contributes much to a structural plastic unity.

The test of the value of any plastic element is always—does the means in question absorb our attention, distract us from the form as a whole, compete with the other means, or does it merge with the other means and heighten their appeal? The painter who relies on isolated effects practices virtuosity, and that belongs aesthetically with the feats of the prestidigitator or juggler. It is only with relation to design that we can judge whether any given use of color, line, light.



or space is an overaccentuation, a piece of virtuosity, or a legitimate, convincing achievement of reality.

Furthermore, one of the most important factors in a painting—that of subsidiary designs—can be appreciated only through the recognition of the function of design as a whole. It is universally agreed that rhythm is one of the most important qualities in a work of art, but rhythm is much more than a duplication of lines or masses. Rhythm at its best appears in the duplication of the general design in the parts of the picture. These subsidiary designs would be indistinguishable from a multiplicity of motives so great as to interfere with unity if we did not keep in mind their relations to the central or dominating design. Titian's "Assumption" is one of the great triumphs of plastic art when considered as an instance of the enrichment of plastic form by many subordinate but harmonious forms; however, an observer who did not grasp the design as a whole would be justified in charging it with being essentially a series of episodes. When Mather says of Signorelli's and Cosimo Rosselli's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel that they are overcrowded, he is guilty of this kind of blindness. It is true that there are many figures and episodes in these pictures, but they are so merged, through intermediate stages, with the total design, that there is no loss of unity. Indeed, the highest mastery in art is manifested in this capacity to include smaller designs in a single all-embracing form. It is impossible to recognize that fact if the elements that go to make up a picture are considered in isolation.

In the course of this book there has been repeated condemnation of both academic pictures and those in which overaccentuation appears. However, the study of such pictures has a value which calls for some discussion. The beginner in appreciation is usually con-

fronted with the difficulty that a picture is, plastically, a chaos in his eyes. The work which must be done before plastic form can be grasped is impossible for him because he cannot find what he is to abstract and to consider with relation to the form as a whole. Hence, in the work of an academic painter like Raphael, the very quality which makes him unsatisfactory as an artist makes him more valuable to the beginner than such painters as Velasquez or Renoir, in whom there is complete freedom from accentuation. The principle is the same as that by which anyone learning to enjoy poetry may be advised to read Kipling, in whom the obviousness of everything makes it difficult for the beginner to go astray. After he has developed sufficiently to read Keats, he will recognize the cheapness of the means by which were attained the effects which he formerly found pleasing.

The same principle should govern the study of the old masters and the more modern painters. In the chapter on the *Transition to Modern Painting*, page 127, we see that the distinction between the two is the liberation of relatively pure design in modern painting. The design in a Cézanne, pleasing to a connoisseur because undiluted by anything extraneous, is not necessarily perceptible and pleasing to a tyro. The very absence of irrelevancies which makes possible a much greater variety, freshness, and originality in design, is likely to be confusing to a beginner. The dilution of plastic form, such as we have it in an academic painter of the past, for example, in Andrea del Sarto's "Madonna of the Harpies," makes possible a more ready abstraction of what design there is. Consequently, the process of education in painting requires a constant cross-reference between contemporary art and the art of the past. That each reveals the sig-

nificance of the other is true both as regards the actual historical relationships, and as regards appreciation. We learn to see design at its best by seeing it in a more primitive form, and when we have seen it at its best, we learn to make the necessary discount when irrelevantities obscure it.

# Learning to See<sup>1</sup>

By MARY MULLEN

THE experience gained in carrying out the educational program of the Barnes Foundation has been sufficiently interesting and instructive to warrant a statement of some of its significant details. Before we obtained a charter as an educational institution, the larger part of our present staff had been engaged in a practical experiment that had two main features: first, a linking-up of the modern conceptions of psychology and aesthetics with a first-hand observation of old and modern paintings; second, through the experience thus gained, an application of modern educational methods in a class of students of diverse degrees of culture and social rank. The experiment covered a period of ten years and the results, when analyzed by educational authorities, were considered of sufficient importance to justify the extension of the plan to universities, colleges, schools and, particularly, to groups of people who had never had the advantages of a college education or the opportunity to study good paintings.

Within a few months of the announcement of the Foundation as an educational institution there appeared about a score of articles in various American and European magazines written by men well-known in art and educational circles. As a result of this unsought-for publicity, we were overwhelmed with applications from institutions and individuals who desired to avail

<sup>1</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, January, 1926.

themselves of what we had to offer. The correspondence yielded a wealth of leads which, under suitable circumstances, could be made extremely valuable material for further educational experiments in the paths which we had already followed for more than a decade. We found oceans of enthusiasm which would have been of inestimable power if it had been accompanied with sufficient intelligence to meet the first requisite of any serious educational movement. This disbalance was manifested in quarters of considerable eminence in the educational world, and almost invariably the plea for admission presented by such applicants was that of prestige. After we had eliminated triflers and would-be exploiters from serious consideration, there was sufficient promising material to occupy our buildings every day with classes of adult students enrolled for systematic study. The present article will deal particularly with a few of the chief difficulties encountered.

We were handicapped at the start by the fact that a majority of our students had dabbled in art in college courses, art academies, public lectures, etc. This necessitated attempts to change the superstitions that painting represents either a pattern, a set of fixed rules for the use of color, line and space, or a (unsuspected) confusion of narrative, historical or moral values suffused with a mystical glow. In each of these cases of mistaken identity the outstanding common factor was the demonstrable *inability to see*. How almost universal is that defect is not suspected until specific tests of aesthetic vision are made. How difficult it is to convince even mature painters that they never get anywhere because they never learn to see cannot be realized except by a teacher familiar with modern educational methods who has made experiments tending to

remove the obstacle. This learning to see is of such vital importance that it merits the more detailed consideration contained in a recital of some observations made in our classes.

Several of the professors of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, who were granted permission to bring their students to our gallery, became so much interested that they asked to attend the regular talks by our educational staff in front of the paintings. At one of these sessions the subject was the analysis of space as an element in plastic form, and its characteristics and significance were demonstrated in paintings that covered the period from the Florentines to the moderns. In the work of a contemporary, Kisling, it was pointed out that it was his skilled use of space, more than of any other means, that gave the painting its aesthetic value. Thereupon one of the Academy professors volunteered the statement that until that moment he had never liked the Kisling and that he had never seen the fine spatial relations which, after they had been pointed out, converted his dislike into pleasure. A different aspect of this inability to see is exemplified in the case of another of this group of Academy professors whose work reveals the influence of Matisse. He fails to see that what makes the work of Matisse important is that, while the decorative element is more in evidence, there is present sufficient grasp of presentation of the significant features of experience to change the character of the painting from mere decoration to personal expression in balanced plastic form. Consequently, the professor's own painting presents a thin version of Matisse's decorative character and not any of the expression that constitutes insight into reality.

Still another instance of the inability to see is repre-

sented in the case of the author of a recent book on art appreciation that was written before he became a member of one of our classes. The thesis of the book is sound only so long as it keeps to the assertion that the appeal of subject-matter should not be confused with art values. Woven around this truism, is a theory made up of paraphrases of the mystification set forth by men like Clive Bell and the late Jay Hambidge as explanations of what makes a painting a work of art. There emerges from this curious medley a demonstration that what the author considers to be the essential art value is pattern, a totally subsidiary element in plastic form.

One of the most striking cases of utter blindness in people who are supposed to know something about art was represented by an instructor at the Corcoran Art Gallery, Washington, D. C. His blindness was evidenced by his remarks about two of our paintings which analyses in plastic terms reveal as among the most important achievements in contemporary painting. The "Three Sisters" by Matisse, he said, is "so slight that it is not entitled to serious consideration." Pascin's "Femme Assise" was condemned because the drawing did not fit into the formula which he recited as the recipe for art. Protean variations of this disorder are duplicated a dozen times in our records of the observations of the behavior of men and women, in the presence of paintings, who teach art in universities, colleges, schools, public galleries and art academies throughout America. Consequently we were forced at the start to study the psychological principles which explain the condition and to adapt educational methods to overcome it.

Although the manifestations of this inability to see are so varied, its cause is to be found in a failure to



grasp certain simple fundamental principles of psychology which no well-informed person would dispute. To see means to perceive, to bring to consciousness; recognition of what constitutes perception and consciousness is, therefore, indispensable. Another truism is that since perception and consciousness are inseparably connected with appreciation, which is a mental state, it follows that mind is the chief factor to be considered. The connecting links between seeing in the sense of perception, of consciousness, and of mind are most clearly and convincingly presented in Professor Dewey's book, *Experience and Nature*. What he writes not only explains the inability to see but points the way to supplant the blindness with the experience which constitutes genuine art appreciation. A word of vital importance in the building of this new structure is "meaning." In each of the above-mentioned instances of blindness in relation to painting, there is a clear perversion of the rational conception of the word "meaning." To be specific: one of the Academy professors failed to recognize the meaning of space in the construction of an artist's creation; another professor did not see that his own preoccupation with decorative qualities prevented him from grasping the meaning of Matisse's message; the author referred to would confine an artist's expression to a mere pattern of line and space built up according to mathematical formulas; the instructor at the Corcoran Art Gallery applied the meaning of an outworn academic formula to Matisse's and Pascin's individual variations of the great traditions of painting as a means of embodying their personal reactions to the world. However, if art is a fragment of life presented to us enriched in feeling by means of the creative spirit of the artist, it is irrational to believe that mathematics, formulas, mere pattern or

decoration, etc., would supply means adequate to the extraordinarily complex manifestations of the human spirit. More rational, indeed demonstrable, is the belief that the artist's work is an expression of an experience which he has undergone, and that the meaning of the painting is that experience.

This conception of meaning as synonymous with experience, is one of the fundamentals upon which Dewey builds those conceptions of consciousness and mind which have revolutionized educational practice and enabled people to understand and enjoy their own experiences in all the activities of life. Dewey writes that "consciousness denotes the perception of meanings," that is, the "awareness of the heres and nows"; and that "mind denotes the whole system of meanings as they are embodied in the workings of organic life." If we submit these definitions to the test of concrete situations in any phase of life, including the study of paintings, there is a convincing adequacy to the meanings of our own experience. Fixed rules give way to the boundless field which human beings, whether they be the creators or the appreciators of art, must have if their spirit is to be free and unhampered. In short, art is a record of experience, and education in art consists in an application of method that takes into account the human attributes of both the artist and the student. Fortunately, experiments in educational science have developed methods which have records of proved value obtained through actual experience.

It is the above-noted conceptions of perception, consciousness, mind, art, that we have tried to weld with modern educational methods, to remedy the widespread inability to see, by the experience without which art is devoid of meaning and becomes a superstition. The recognition of consciousness as the "awareness of the

meanings of the heres and nows" points the way to all the goals, but it will lead to none until those present meanings become live and significant in relation to that whole system of meanings, which constitutes mind; in other words, mind contains the luminosity that gives color, quality, precision, to the "heres and nows." For example, if we look for a story or a moral in a painting, our mind holds the meaning that a painting is a story, not a record of an experience presented through the creative use of line, color and space. If we like Titian and do not like Renoir, we have failed to see the meaning of the "heres and nows" in the case of each artist; that is, from the organized meanings which constitute our mind there is missing that meaning which makes the work of the two artists closely akin. If we like both men, our minds contain the meaning that the "here and now" in each painter is the use of line, color and space in a similar manner to create something which is independent of subject-matter. In this case, another meaning in our minds is that art is not imitation but creation; and how can we differentiate between imitation and creation unless we have in our minds a clear grasp, that is, the meaning, of the tradition as it is represented in Titian; and the consciousness, that is, the perception of the "here and now," that Renoir modified the Titian tradition to his own ends and that by so doing he created something new, and by the same plastic means as Titian used?

It thus becomes apparent that a thing is seen only when its significance is perceived in the light shed by the organized meanings which is mind. To thus see, means that there is, as it were, "a series of flashes of varying intensities" (perception, consciousness), thrown intermittently upon that persistent, substantial structure of meanings which is mind. Experience is

possible only when that duplex action takes place, and it is valuable only when both factors in the situation are constantly alive to the finer shades of meanings which this interplay reveals. The absence of that interplay explains the blindness of the painters and educators above referred to and their unsuitability to act as guides to younger people who seek help in expressing themselves or in learning to appreciate the artistic expressions of others. It is the development of that interplay which is the goal of all modern educational science.

Educators complain incessantly that the most difficult of their tasks is to get rid of the set of fixed forms which, especially in adults, masquerade as thinking and prevent the process of learning by experience. That difficulty has been ours and, because of the prevalence of outworn and irrational methods in teaching art, progress has been even slower than in other fields where the objective features of experience are more susceptible to verifiable observation.

From the start we have kept in mind the essentially experimental character of our venture and for material we have drawn upon various sources, such as young painters, school and college students and teachers, writers, people in the ordinary walks of life. Large numbers of students from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts were admitted several days a week accompanied by their professors. We made no attempt at instruction but spent our time in observing the behavior, including the remarks, of the professors and the students. After about four months of this experience, it was clear to everybody, including the intelligent minority of the students, that nothing of educational value came of their repeated visits. Their professors, never having been taught to see, either con-

fined their remarks to unimportant matters of painting technique or spread the kind of diffuse, free-floating emotion that characterizes the behavior of those in whom superstition functions in the place of definite ideas and intelligent method brought to bear on paintings. In fact, from the educational standpoint, these professors and their students got hardly more out of their visits than did the group of bankers, lawyers and college professors who had also been admitted frequently. To the most intelligent member of the faculty of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts we suggested that we coöperate in an effort to work out a plan by which their students could be guided toward an intelligent approach to paintings. The professor confessed that no such plan had even been attempted at the Academy and that its mere suggestion by him would be likely to cause his dismissal from its faculty. The experiment yielded to us a group of about a score of painters and students of paintings who were enrolled in our various classes. We learned also from this and similar experiences that aimless wandering in a gallery is about on a par with the daydreaming furnished by attendance at the movies. As a consequence, no persons are admitted now except those enrolled for systematic study.

What is the meaning of "systematic study" of paintings? The three books published by members of our educational staff state the plan from the three indispensable standpoints, psychology, aesthetics and educational method.<sup>2</sup> What we seek to do here is to state a few general educational principles upon which the method is based. For example, we start with the

<sup>2</sup> In general, the point of view of these books is explained in Section I of this Volume, with some illustration of the results yielded when particular problems are considered in its light.

axiom that education is another name for meeting the practical problems of life, one of which is the significance of art. It results from a reaction between an individual and his environment, and in our case that problem is to establish a reaction between the qualities common to all human beings, and a collection of works of old and modern art. We accept the modern conception that mind is not something in itself, but a course of action in which aims, ends, selection of means to attain ends, are intelligently directed. We find that the individual and the world are engaged in a constantly developing situation. This, and this only, results in experience—an environment which affects the individual and which in turn is affected by him. From experience arises culture, that is, the constant expansion of the range and accuracy of the perceptions which the individual obtains from the varied contacts with life. Education, thus carried out, develops initiative, inventiveness and the ability of the individual to readapt himself to the constantly changing situation which is life. We have found it an adventure, as much fun as playing a game, and enjoyable for the same reason.

All these principles are indispensable parts of modern educational science; they seem so much matters of common sense, that it is almost incredible that anybody should balk at accepting them as the intelligent way to approach the study of paintings. However, when various institutions applied for the privilege of "studying" our paintings and we asked them to furnish evidence that their courses in art showed that their students had had preliminary training according to those principles, they were stunned at what they considered our effrontery.

Another difficulty was furnished by a large number



of adults whose vocations or avocations show that the aesthetic phases of life really mean something of vital importance to them. Many of this group are painters, more of them are interested in music, literature, teaching, public movements in the line of civic culture. Our object is ultimately to offer to this class of people an integration of the values created by great thinkers and great artists, with life itself. That object seemed as sensible to us as did our wish to have universities and colleges put to work the contributions which came from the real creators in their own ranks. But we encountered the same inertia, the same pious wish for knowledge, the same desire to daydream in our gallery—in short, the desire to get something for nothing. The objection was offered that these people are “practical,” don’t want “book-stuff.” This amuses us because the twelve-acre park, the beautiful buildings and the hundreds of paintings of the Barnes Foundation were all acquired by merely transferring that “book-stuff” to the events of everyday life, which means business and leisure, work and play. The difficulty with these “practical” people was solved, at least for us, by the same means that solved the problem with the universities, colleges and schools: that is, we make the price of identification with our project the manifestation of *interest*. In order to avoid misunderstanding, we have defined interest as “an anxiety concerning future consequences which impels the individual to do something to obtain better consequences and avoid worse ones.” We invite criticism of the definition and ask merely that any acts which seem to deny that definition be subjected to a disinterested body of thinkers whose decision shall be final. The idea seems to have worked out fairly well, for we have classes in our buildings every day, including Sunday.



The title of this article, *Learning to See*, may seem far fetched; but if one considers that the process of seeing implies that the perception of objects in the external world is valuable in proportion as the mind illuminates those perceptions, "seeing" becomes but another name for experience, for education and for culture. It makes of seeing, something individual, whether the one who sees is an artist or an appreciator. Our job is to attempt to re-wed these two natural mates after their divorce brought about by the educational disorder that would make art something apart from everyday life.

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With the idea of helping those who feel the need of an adequate background for a comprehensive study of aesthetics, of plastic art, and of modern educational conceptions, we append a list of books. We cannot too strongly emphasize the fact that the background thus gained will reveal, in the events of everyday life, the aesthetic phases which the artist has seen and has expressed. In other words, works of art are thus linked to experience and become valuable and meaningful through the development of interests identical with those of their creators. In that way, the appreciation of art becomes real, genuine, personal and, therefore, intelligent. The books recommended are as follows:

BOSANQUET: Three Lectures on Aesthetics.

COLUMBIA ASSO-

CIATES IN PHI-

LOSOPHY: Introduction to Reflective Thinking.

- DEWEY: Democracy and Education.  
Human Nature and Conduct.  
Experience and Nature.  
Schools of Tomorrow.
- ELLIS: The Dance of Life.  
The New Spirit.
- JAMES: Pragmatism.  
Principles of Psychology.  
Talks to Teachers.  
Varieties of Religious Experience.
- MCDUGALL: Social Psychology.
- SANTAYANA: Reason in Art.  
The Sense of Beauty.  
Three Philosophical Poets.
- TROTTER: Instincts of the Herd in Peace and  
War.
- MULLEN: An Approach to Art.
- BUERMAYER: The Aesthetic Experience.
- BARNES: The Art in Painting.
- GUILLAUME AND  
MUNRO: Primitive Negro Sculpture.
- MUNRO: Scientific Method in Aesthetics.

# An Experience in Studying Paintings <sup>1</sup>

By MARY MULLEN

DURING the past season one of the classes at the Barnes Foundation made an intensive study of modern pictures with the object of tracing the development, by the moderns, of the traditions of painting as represented by the early Florentines and Venetians. It is quite evident that the means which the painters of all ages may legitimately employ—that is, color, line, space—are exactly the same, so that it is reasonable to assert that modern art, instead of being a radical departure from the art of the Renaissance, is an evolution of that art, and that in order to understand and appreciate the paintings of this as of any other age it is necessary to trace step by step the fundamental traditions. This is the thesis set forth in one of our publications, *The Art in Painting*. In order to test its validity, the class above mentioned went abroad this summer to observe in the old masters the traditions which have been utilized by later painters to express themselves. It is futile to talk about paintings without at the same time looking at them; photographs and lantern slides are totally inadequate substitutes, and their only value lies in helping one to recall the originals to memory. It is the relations of color, line and space that constitute plastic form, and those relations are incapable of being reproduced.

With *The Art in Painting* as a textbook, the pictures

<sup>1</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, October, 1925.

in the principal galleries of Italy, France, Spain and England were studied to determine how the early painters used their means and what they accomplished. In the light of the text, and especially of the analyses of particular pictures, it became apparent that painting has developed just as other arts and sciences develop; that is, from the accumulated traditions of the different ages, the real artist has always borrowed what is useful for his purpose and modified it to express his own personality. Study of the old paintings showed that no tradition persists unchanged beyond its own age, and that no sound tradition ever entirely disappears. Thus Renoir and Cézanne reveal a close kinship to Titian and Michel Angelo, while Matisse and Picasso used the contributions of Oriental art, of El Greco and of others, to attain to new ends.

That good modern paintings are individual variations of the old means was brought home to the class very vividly one day in the Louvre, when, before a Chardin, analyses of early Florentine, Venetian and Dutch pictures were read, only to reveal that the early painters' method of using color, line and space could be pointed out, in modified and personally creative forms, in the Chardin. This method of tracing the characteristics of the earlier painters in later men, and seeing how the later men modified them in an individual, personal way, is now used in the class as part of the regular plan in plastic research. It has been found to be of great service in familiarizing the students with the traditions; but, best of all, it is seen to supply the criterion that determines the creative ability of artists. Unless we know what the artist was trying to do, what means were at his command and how he has used them to accomplish his ends, we cannot know whether he achieved a characteristic expres-

sion or whether his work was merely a repetition of traditional formulas and, therefore, lacking in creative ability. A more detailed account of the method of study as practised will indicate its value.

The Fifteenth Century Italian painter, Piero della Francesca, achieved his individual plastic design by personal modification of line, color and space as these are found in Giotto. In neither artist is the portrayal of narrative—chiefly religious themes—to be regarded as anything but the setting for the plastic design which makes their paintings significant as works of art. In the case of Piero the cool detachment, which is one of his characteristics, leaves no doubt that the story was of secondary consideration to the plastic design. The chief distinction between ancient and modern painting is that the moderns are interested much more in pure design and that subject-matter is relatively unimportant. While even Piero distorted all his plastic means to some extent in the interest of design, the later men distort so much that in some cases there is no faithful reproduction of the naturalistic appearance of objects as, for instance, in Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, Pascin, etc.

Piero's subtle use of color is undoubtedly one of his principal plastic means. In general, it is a cool, pervasive blue, so varied with light and related to other colors as to give an effect capable of arousing profound aesthetic feelings. In the work of the contemporary painter, Picasso, in his so-called "blue period," we find a quite similar use of a pervasive, subtly varied blue. As in Piero, the blue accomplishes similar effects: it moves through the entire picture, and even when combined with other colors it dominates them and gives the painting its characteristic form. The combination of a rich old ivory with the blue is common to both

men. A simplicity similar to Piero's is also noted when, in Picasso, the color itself is felt as a mass or gives the effect of space as it recedes into the background, and is the one particular element that unites the composition into an organic whole. The quality of the color, though less cool and less dry than Piero's, contributes its share to the general feeling of detachment and dignity which is a part of Picasso's own individual expression.

Two other similarities in method of using the plastic means are very striking and recall inevitably the kinship between the two artists: Picasso's drawing produces the same rigidity in the arms, legs and heads which contributes so much to Piero's design. Picasso's modeling, to achieve the effect of third dimension in figures, is accomplished by the same subtle use of light and color which yields that one-piece-like effect to the various parts of the body, especially the face, which is so characteristic of Piero.

However, to an observer who is familiar only with the old masters, Picasso's form would remain unknown even after his debt to Piero had been recognized. Almost five centuries separate the ages of the two painters, and during that period the high Renaissance and the great subsequent painters had contributed much to the traditions. The plastic means—color, line, space—had each been put to new purposes by Titian, Tintoretto, El Greco, Velasquez, Rubens, Daumier, Cézanne, Renoir, Manet, Degas and others; the results were new and monumental effects that had become thoroughly integrated into the traditions of painting when Picasso appeared on the scene. In the work of Picasso can be detected traces of the traditions of every age subsequent to Piero, together with the fact that Picasso so modified and integrated the

influences that a personal, individual creation emerges.

What has been said concerning Piero's influence upon Picasso can be stated also of the Piero tradition upon painters of such widely divergent types of expressions as Puvis de Chavannes, Cézanne, Renoir and Prendergast; the perception of these influences is an everyday occurrence with the members of our classes who have studied the original paintings. The point, however, is not to emphasize Piero's greatness, but to indicate that part of what made the work of the old masters significant is the fact that the presence of traditions which they established can be demonstrated in the work of all the important painters since the Renaissance. Further reference to particular painters will illustrate the general principle with more precision.

Uccello, a Florentine painter of the Fourteenth Century, is now universally esteemed as one of the most important of the old masters, although during his life his work was as strongly condemned by the academicians as was the work of impressionists fifty years ago. The cause of the condemnation was that Uccello made a radical departure from current traditions by so subordinating subject-matter to plastic design that the narrative appeared grotesque. In fact, the grotesqueness of the scene, viewed from the naturalistic standpoint, was inevitable to the dramatic use of the plastic means which is the outstanding quality of Uccello's form. For instance, in his battle scenes the straight lines of spears and swords, the curved lines of men and animals, are brought into such relations with one another that the figures and the spaces which they occupy make designs that as creations are infinitely more moving aesthetically than any story represented realistically. In his work appeared for the first time the sacrifice of plausible and realistic narrative to the



achievement of abstract design. All the means were deliberately distorted—line, color and, particularly, space—to such an extent that it was not until comparatively recent times that Uccello's work began to be appreciated for the tremendously moving power of his plastic form. Students of painting now see in Uccello the origin of much of what makes the work of subsequent painters, like Raphael and El Greco, significant. That is, a painting is a work of art only when its aesthetic appeal is generated by the creative use of line, space and color to realize a form which has its own identity independent of narrative and sentimental values. When this axiom is recognized we see that the single element in Raphael which entitles him to high rank as an artist is his ability so to place objects that the spatial intervals between them are aesthetically moving. We see that Uccello not only exceeded Raphael in the novel use of space to create a design that is powerful aesthetically, but that he was able to so relate line, space and color that his total plastic form is greater: it results from the integration of all the plastic means in an organic unity.

After the class had observed these characteristics of Uccello's work—that is, had learned to abstract plastic from narrative values—the first indispensable step had been taken toward the recognition of the significant features of all those painters since El Greco, who had subordinated representation to plastic design, which necessitated distortion of naturalistic appearances. It was a delightful adventure to see how El Greco emphasized line, light and color to achieve ends similar to those that Uccello accomplished by emphasizing and distorting perspective; how the modern Rousseau le Douanier unified Uccello's method of using space with other elements of the Florentine and subsequent tradi-

tions and attained to a new form of infinite charm and naïveté; how the contemporary Chirico so builds upon the Uccello-like utilization of space that something new and moving aesthetically is added to the tradition. We saw in the best work of Matisse, Picasso, Soutine, Pascin and other contemporaries a design which can be compared point by point with similar use of the plastic means in Uccello.

It was with considerable misgivings that we approached the application of the method to the study of the important Botticellis in the Uffizi, because the obvious and universal appeal that has made those paintings popular is assailed in *The Art in Painting* as based upon sentimental rather than strong plastic values. The reasons for questioning the importance of Botticelli had been stated repeatedly during the past season in our talks in front of the paintings in the gallery of the Foundation, at which time the relative importance of decorative and structural forms had been discussed. We began the study of Botticelli's famous "Spring" by an analysis of the artist's use of line, space and color individually, and then raised the question to what extent they had been integrated into an organic unity. We were all deeply impressed with the graceful charm of the painting "Spring," and endeavored to see by what plastic means that effect was produced. We found a marvellously fluid and graceful line winding in and around all the objects and making a succession of patterns which add to the charm of the line. It builds a series of arabesques that are rhythmic in the highest degree; but the line has no structural value, such as it has in the Venetians, and has little of the organic or functional power, as it has in Giotto or Piero; the color is dull and somewhat garish, offers only the superficial pleasingness of feeble color com-

binations and is not so related to line and space that new forms emerge. His line is not expressive in the sense that plastic expression is the balanced and integrated use of all the plastic means. The result is that Botticelli's line, whether in revealing movement or psychological states, is more akin to imitation than to creation. His line, unsupported by integration with the plastic means, amounts to an accentuation of a detail which stands out in isolation instead of being merged with the other plastic elements into a design which functions as a whole. In other words, the facile, extraordinary, almost flamboyant decorative forms are accompanied by so little structural plastic substance that we look upon Botticelli's paintings as primarily high-grade decorations which cannot be considered seriously as works of the greatest art. The difference between expression, or expressive form, and decoration is that in expression the use of form and matter is subsidiary to rendering the essential quality of what is presented as the artist sees it, while in decoration the painter need consider nothing but the relation of color, line, space, mass to other color, line, space, mass. In all paintings expression and decoration are clearly separable upon analysis, but they fuse into an ensemble in aesthetic perception of the highest order.

What we observed in Botticelli proved valuable to our general plan by relating it to what we had studied in a modern painter, Renoir, whose work is also highly decorative. The elaborate arabesques and linear rhythms of Botticelli create an appeal which is comparatively lacking in Renoir; but when we consider integration of all the plastic means into a total form as the touchstone of aesthetic value we see that Renoir is the greater artist. His decorative surfaces are made up of a fusion of line, light and color which are integral

parts of his structural forms. As a result, decoration and expression combine into a series of plastic units which, in turn, merge one with the other into a rich total design, a harmonious interweaving of all the plastic means. This comparison again illustrates the kinship between old and modern painting in that the decorative forms, which make the charm of Botticelli's work, reappear, but with increased power, in those contributions of the great subsequent painters—Venetian, Rubens, the Eighteenth Century Frenchmen—upon which Renoir built his individual plastic form.

Our study of Michel Angelo was particularly illuminating because we applied the method to one of the old masters themselves, and had ocular demonstration that even the greatest of them attained to their individual expression by utilizing the contributions of their predecessors. Michel Angelo, perhaps more than any other painter, conveys the feeling of abstract power and strength. His design, as revealed in the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, consists chiefly of a rather incisive line related to color, light and space through the medium of a series of internal smaller designs represented by muscular accentuations. Each of the plastic means is itself indicative of strength and power, and there are no weak spots in the process of organizing those individual effects into a unified whole. However, in spite of the individuality of the total effect, the debt he owes to previous artists is clearly perceptible in the case of each of the plastic means. His incisive line, his use of light and shadow in modeling, the peculiarly strong and sensuous quality of his color, the quite particular effects yielded by muscular accentuations—all these may be seen clearly in work prior to his: Greek sculpture, the paintings of Giotto, Verrocchio, Pollaiuolo, Signorelli, Cosima Tura, Leonardo, etc. What

Michel Angelo did was to make the traditions of his predecessors the foundation for new and distinctly personal effects, just as later men, Tintoretto, El Greco, Rubens, Poussin and many others make the Michel Angelo tradition a point of departure for their own individual contributions.

Our interest in Michel Angelo became a very personal one when we saw in the Delacroix, Daumiers, Cézannes and Matisse in our collection similar effects attained with precisely the same means that enter into the Michel Angelo tradition. But here, as was the case with Michel Angelo's own use of his predecessors' contributions, numerous other traditions were made use of by Delacroix, Daumier, Cézanne and Matisse in creating their own forms. For example, in our Delacroix there is the same use of accentuations to convey the feeling of muscular power, but the Venetian use of color and a modification of the Rubens swirl of light, line and color, make a new tradition, Delacroix's own, which has been adopted by many subsequent painters. Daumier, too, used muscular accentuation, but added to it still another phase of the Venetian color tradition, as well as an adaptation of the chief technical device of Rembrandt—chiaroscuro; these in turn were endowed with a new significance by Daumier's original method of making a heavy line of color serve the triple purpose of making distortions, defining contours and entering into relations with adjacent areas to make new color forms. The total effect is a monumental solidity and power scarcely less moving than the same effects in the best work of Michel Angelo. Cézanne took over whole forms of Michel Angelo—including quality of color and muscular accentuations, added to them El Greco's distortions, Daumier's heavy line of color, Manet's method of applying paint, and

his own modification of the impressionist's technique of color juxtapositions, plus the modeling by modulation of color-spots originated by himself. The composite effect is comparable in power to Michel Angelo's, but more austere and set in a design which exerts an added appeal by reason of the departures from naturalism. Matisse shows no direct derivation from Michel Angelo, but the contributions of Delacroix, Daumier and Cézanne, above mentioned, have each been separated from the ensemble which makes the work of those later artists resemble Michel Angelo's, and are used by Matisse to realize the structural forms attained by the use of color which characterize Matisse's individual contribution to the traditions of painting. This kinship between Delacroix, Cézanne and Matisse is easily seen in comparing works of those artists in our collection, where line, color, light and space are used in the same manner in certain parts of the figures.

The instances cited are sufficient to illustrate the principles of an objective method of studying paintings that is based upon observation, experience and reflection. It replaces the prevalent error of reading stories into pictures, as well as the practice of academicians of applying a set of technical dogmas which substitute mechanical rule for intelligent judgment. In short, our method instructs the observer how to look for plastic or "significant" form and supplies the criteria by which it is to be judged when found.

Our experience in studying both ancient and modern pictures according to the method outlined proved that students with sufficient background will, after a short training, form the habit of ignoring narrative, sentiment and other irrelevant matters, and occupy them-



selves with the only attributes which make a painting significant, that is, plastic design. Art becomes then not a matter of old paintings or modern paintings, but of good art and bad art.<sup>1</sup> We saw in Giotto indubitable evidence that he sacrificed literal reproduction by distorting the plastic means whenever it was necessary to achieve a more moving plastic design. We saw that same practice at work in the paintings of every great artist, from the Renaissance to our age, and we realized that these departures from literal reproduction were the cause of the aesthetic appeal exerted by the plastic design. In other words, they express a human interest of essential value in terms truly plastic, and such expressiveness is inevitably an enhancement and not a distraction. These distortions of line in Giotto, of light in Leonardo, of space in Uccello, will escape no attentive observer, nor will the fact that these practices became a part of the traditions which every subsequent important artist employed or modified to his own ends. The chief difference between the old and the new paintings is that the moderns, beginning with Courbet, Manet and the men of 1870, liberated themselves more completely from the restrictions imposed by subject-matter and exhibit greater interest in relatively pure design. When we compare the plastic design of the great painters of the Renaissance with the design in the great moderns and contemporaries like Courbet, Manet, Renoir, Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, we see the similarity in every essential constituent. From Giotto through the Renaissance to the great painters of our own age, we see the threads of the traditions, which gave the old paintings their value as works of art, continued, added to, modified, often made more significant. The determinants have been the general spirit of the time and the states of culture



in all the intervening ages—ages which, of course, have been alternately rich and arid. In fact, an infallible indication of this richness or aridity is the quality of the painting of the age in question. The decadence subsequent to the Renaissance was followed by the flowering of El Greco, of Velasquez, of Rubens, later of the Eighteenth Century French, of Constable, Delacroix, Manet, Renoir, Cézanne and, in our age, of Matisse, Picasso, Soutine, Modigliani and others. It is a fascinating study to trace those traditions merely as an intellectual game; but even richer are the rewards when we see the play of personality, of soul and of character that real artists put into their own modifications and adaptations of the contributions of their great predecessors. It makes us independent of such incidents as current religion, superstition, materialism or what not, which fix the spirit of any particular age. Great artists always rise superior to such incidents and express universal values in line, color, space, integrated into plastic design. We share their Olympian superiority when we learn to read that plastic design intelligently.

# A Constructive Program for Teaching Art<sup>1</sup>

By THOMAS MUNRO

THE teaching of art, as of all other subjects, should be based upon the fundamental aims and principles of education in general. What education should be, as related to American democratic ideals and to modern scientific methods, has been discussed by William James, John Dewey and other educators. Some of their most fundamental ideas are summarized in Section *A* below. Subsequent sections are concerned with questions relating more directly to the teaching of art in the schools, and to practical suggestions for the correction of present evils.

*A. Education should aim at the harmonious development of native abilities.*

1. True education is one with growth; it consists not in coercing or distorting human nature into prescribed moulds, but in encouraging and assisting the natural and harmonious growth of man's inborn powers.

2. Education in a democratic society aims not to sacrifice the individual to the group, but to develop individual character, and at the same time to harmonize its interests with those of others.

3. It aims not to divide and solidify society into artificial classes with special privileges, but to produce

<sup>1</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, April, 1925.

a flexible society in which changes are possible, in which both control and rewards are shared, and in which individuals have equal opportunity to develop their abilities.

4. Education broadly conceived lasts the entire lifetime, not only during school years; no one period is necessarily less valuable than others, and none is to be considered merely as a means to an end. Schooling is to be conceived not merely as a preparation for later life, but as a period to be made worthwhile and enjoyable in itself, as well as productive for the future.

5. Schooling can be made thus valuable, and the maximum of effort secured, only by developing interest in the work done.

6. The maximum of interest can be secured only by encouraging the intelligent analysis and active, experimental solution of problems vital to the student, instead of blind obedience and imitation, uncritical habit and the passive absorbing of information remote from actual life. In other words, education should proceed by doing, by putting ideas into practice.

*B. Aesthetic growth requires freedom for individual thought and feeling.*

7. The chief aim of art education should be the development of the individual's own aesthetic powers, with emphasis on clear, spontaneous feeling and ability to organize experience creatively, rather than on the memorizing of facts about art, or the acquiring of technical skill along stereotyped lines. Pupils should be encouraged to look at nature and their own affairs with a fresh, untrammelled and personal vision, and to devise by experiment the means most appropriate to express this vision.

8. This implies a persistent effort to prevent

obstruction by other considerations, such as the standardizing of large-scale instruction, the imposing of stated tasks for exact marks, diplomas and college entrance, and the imparting of quickly marketable skill.

9. In so far as work is made to assume the spirit of play, to be interesting and attractive in itself, it takes on an aesthetic quality, abilities tend to develop without pressure, and maximum effort is put forth.

10. Interest and the play-spirit are fostered by allowing a large amount of freedom for individual action, opinion and preference. Aesthetic feeling is repressed by dogmatic and coercive rules, distorted into insincerity by uncritical acceptance of authority and prestige.

11. Therefore, old and accepted traditions, forms, methods and standards in art, even when superior to the pupil's own work, should not be presented to him as absolute authorities. They should be presented rather as tentative suggestions, which he is not to imitate blindly, but to analyze and comprehend, and from which he is to select what is of value in dealing with his own problems and in developing his own standards. Some imitation of models and of more talented classmates is to some extent inevitable, but should be made, so far as possible, discriminating and rational.

12. The student should be made familiar not only with old and accepted forms of art, but with present-day experimentation, and encouraged to use his judgment in selecting the good from the bad in the activity and products of his own time.

13. Persistent and determined effort should be made to avoid the laying down by teachers of dogmatic rules and standards in either creation or appre-

ciation of art. The standards and "laws" of good art now generally taught in public schools (e.g., that certain color combinations, subjects and modes of representation are the only good ones) are false and obstructive to originality. There is at present little agreement upon other definite standards to take their place. Furthermore, a standard evolved or discovered by the pupil for himself is of far greater value than one accepted ready-made.

14. Associated with dogmatism, and equally harmful to art, is the standardized mass instruction prevalent in public schools. To a large extent this is at present inevitable because of the number of pupils, inadequacy of equipment, centralized official control, scarcity and underpayment of teachers and their faulty training. But in art more than in any other field, regimentation is fatal to progress and determined effort should be made to remove the conditions necessitating it. Methods of art instruction should so far as possible be varied to fit the peculiar tendencies of each individual.

15. Special efforts toward this end should be made in the case of gifted and unusual pupils, the potential leaders of art. They should be sought for, detached from the mass, given exceptional attention, resources and freedom from interference. For certain individuals, sensitive and imaginative, even class discussion of their own work may be painful and harmful. Such students should be allowed a considerable amount of privacy, but not cast entirely adrift. They should be tactfully discouraged from withdrawing entirely into a solitary dream-world, and invited to take as great a part in social occupations as they can enjoy. The tyranny and ridicule of their schoolmates toward such unusual children should be prevented by persua-

sion or coercion if necessary. Meanwhile the teacher should attempt sympathetically to discover and correct any existing causes of nervous disorder and unsocial conduct, and to bring private visions into full and conscious expression.

16. Such exceptional treatment is consistent with the ideal of democracy, since it is based upon ability and original nature rather than on birth or wealth. Individualistic education of the type proposed is not socially disintegrative, since free discussion and enterprise make for mutual understanding and tolerance, spontaneous coöperation, removal of the causes of friction and persecution.

17. For exceptional students, and to a large extent for all students, little positive instruction in art is desirable. The basis of procedure should be to surround the child with stimuli to artistic experiment, including tools, materials, and a few simple and varied examples of the use of these materials according to the chief artistic traditions. Thus provided, he should be left to play with these articles when and as he wishes.

*C. Aesthetic growth is furthered by genuinely rational control and analysis.*

18. Reliance upon freedom and "self-expression" may, however, be carried to excess. To leave children entirely unguided and uninspired is an extreme of anarchy that defeats itself. Without external stimulus the play impulse may be insufficient to induce the overcoming of inertia and first difficulties, the forming of a taste for new activities. Habits may be formed which are themselves restrictive, such as aimless dissipation of energy, daydreaming, shyness, combativeness, imitativeness, indolence and contentment with mediocrity.

Time may be needlessly wasted in not knowing how to start, or in searching for solutions without a clue, when a slight suggestion from the teacher would put the pupil on the right track. The golden mean is to give such hints and break up restrictive habits without positively directing specific actions.

19. Artistic power is, on the whole, increased by intelligent analysis and reflection properly directed. Feeling is deadened by analysis excessively prolonged, and confused by irrelevant arguments and unnecessary theorizing. But by analysis, moderate in amount, directed toward facilitating free expression, clarifying values, disentangling emotions and their objects, aesthetic feeling is liberated and intensified.

20. Therefore art and the standards of taste should not be treated as matters of pure impulse and emotion, but discussed and analyzed to a considerable degree, that problems may be intelligently dealt with and the reasons for preference (for distaste and enjoyment) brought to conscious recognition. Pupils should be asked frequently to make their own choices and judgments of value clear, explicit, reasoned and supported by facts. Periods of individual construction by students and of demonstration of traditional forms by the teachers, should in general be followed by periods of free discussion, in which judgments are analyzed, challenged and defended. Its aim should be not agreement, but clarification and organization of one's own ideas and feelings, understanding of and sympathy with those of others.

*D. Artistic and other activities should be mutually correlated.*

21. The various arts should be studied with regard to their mutual relations and their relations to all other



subjects and activities in the student's education. If any field is studied in itself it tends to become formalized and artificial and to lose the interest arising from a perception of wide human relationships.

22. Aesthetic feeling and imagination do not constitute a special faculty of the mind, and are not restricted to enjoyment of the fine arts, but pervade all activity that is felt to be worth while in itself, all experience that is interesting, voluntary and intelligent. Art is not radically distinct from other activities. It is a field in which creation and enjoyment for their own sake are given fullest scope, and most completely freed from ulterior, narrowly practical considerations. Yet if entirely divorced from the rest of life, made a luxury and a way of escape from reality, it becomes soft, attenuated and effeminate. Great art has been, as a rule, closely bound up with other vital human interests, with religion, philosophy, science and practical affairs.

23. Aesthetic education, therefore, should not be considered as a special subject or discipline distinct from others, nor should imagination be directed into an artificial world remote from the student's own experience. All subjects and school activities should be so conducted as to reveal their possible beauty and interest. Instruction in the particular arts, such as literature, music, painting and sculpture, should assume the special function of revealing and enhancing the elements of beauty in other subjects which the student is studying at the time, and in his outside activities, games and home life. Thereby the student should be directed toward utilizing the materials of his own experience for aesthetic enjoyment, and for imaginative reconstruction through the medium of art. This does not imply a limitation to the immediately visible and tangible; but other worlds, such as that of Greek my-

thology, should be so far as possible translated into familiar terms, and made to enter into present activities, rather than contemplated at a distance. For example, events and characters in history and literature can be utilized as themes for dramatic enactment by students. With this may be combined the use of foreign languages and appropriate music, and the production of stage scenery and costumes. Study of physics, civics and artistic proportion can be correlated by showing their applications in the architecture of public buildings; without introducing technical complexities, original designs can be called for that will involve both beauty and practicability.

24. The several arts can be correlated by using the same themes for representation in various media. This will serve to point out the principles of design common to all art, such as unity, variety, rhythm and subordination.

25. Use of a familiar subject as theme may be made a means of first arousing interest in a new artistic medium, such as drawing or painting. The student will naturally be most concerned to find adequate expression for a theme which is itself vital to him, e.g., the near-by park, river or city blocks, the plants and animals which he has seen, the athletics and holiday amusements in which he participates.

26. Once directed into artistic expression, his interest may be guided to more specific problems of form, to the clarifying and organizing of expression. He will go on to perceive the difference between successful and unsuccessful treatment of a given subject, between a work which pleases only by its subject, and one which pleases by its design as well. He should examine several different treatments of the subject he is trying to express (e.g., landscape) by artists of various

schools; he should, likewise, examine works of similar design (effects of line, light and color) that vary greatly in subject, perhaps coming from remote civilizations. Thus he will learn to dissociate subject from plastic form, and to evaluate the latter on its own merits.

27. Objects used and perceived in the ordinary environment should be pointed out and analyzed as to their possession or lack of plastic forms, such as hats, chairs, rugs, vases, wallpaper, textiles, garments and buildings. By comparison, specimens or reproductions of historic treatments of these objects should be analyzed, such as Greek vases, Persian rugs and American Colonial furniture. Along with observation should go original design and construction, the adaptation, combination and modification of forms observed.

28. No sharp distinction should be made at first between the fine and useful arts, the emphasis being rather on disclosing the principles of design common to both. In useful art the student should be shown how an artist takes a practical need, a utilitarian object, as an occasion for realizing at the same time a beautiful form; how the dictates of utility may function as themes and inspirations, rather than as limits, in the creations of beauty. Industrial art should not be taught as a field whose methods are radically different from those of fine art, whose products are essentially utilitarian, with stereotyped decoration superficially added. The requirements of utility and of good design should be shown, by example and experiment, as capable of thorough reconciliation.

29. When the requirements of financial need must be considered in school such requirements should not be allowed to hinder the formation of genuinely rational ideals; the standards of good art and of com-

mercial marketability should be clearly distinguished. The fact of poverty should not be used as a pretext for prematurely depriving some students of all but commercially useful training, or of unnecessarily limiting their intellectual and aesthetic growth.

*E. Specific values and interests should be clearly distinguished.*

30. Harmonious aesthetic development requires not only the correlation of interest, aims and methods, but the clear perception of differences between them. All creation in art, as in science, and all understanding and appreciation, require the ability to select from a mass of material what is essential to a particular interest, then to reorganize it in a more effective form.

31. Thus, continued study of the arts should disclose the several types of value and interest peculiar to each, the limitations and potentialities peculiar to each medium, the confusion and weakness that results from trying to do with a given medium something for which it is unfitted. For example, though a novel and a picture will both be seen to involve design, the novel will be recognized as especially capable of interesting by narration and character-analysis, the picture by patterns of line, light and color. Confusion of values in art construction will be avoided by realizing clearly the qualities and consequent limitations of the medium, its special adaptability to particular ends and inadaptability to others. In appreciation it will be avoided by realizing the particular aim and method of the artist, and not judging his work on irrelevant grounds. In the plastic arts selection of the essential implies production of visual forms which are interesting in themselves, apart from associated values of literary, historical or morally edifying subject-matter.

*F. Sequence of steps in instruction should follow natural growth.*

32. Selection of the essential in plastic art does not imply the literal representation, however skillful, of objects exactly as seen. It implies omission of irrelevant details, and recombination of what is significant for a particular interest. The usual procedure of school art instruction, insistence on observation of details and representation by conventional technic, is foreign not only to art but to natural aesthetic development. The child's spontaneous mode of procedure is to express his own concept, formed automatically in memory of objects seen, or imaginatively by reconstructing memory images. The imagining and setting down of such pictures is not only easiest and most agreeable to the child, but is essentially artistic, since it involves selection, reconstruction and aesthetic appeal. Instead of being asked to draw a box or vase of flowers exactly as he sees it, the child should be asked to draw from his mind a picture of the object, or of any type of scene or object that he has frequently observed, read about or imagined. Apparent faults of perspective, anatomy and the like are not under the circumstances real faults, and should not be emphasized. The important aim is to induce the child to visualize something clearly, and express his vision fully.

33. If the child's imagination is feeble or his hand unable to express it, it is then the function of the teacher to stimulate and suggest. The initiative should, so far as possible, come from the pupil, the teacher intervening only to aid in the solution of a too difficult problem or to discourage premature specialization or contentment with mediocrity. The teacher's aim in

such intervention should be to assist the student to develop, enrich and organize his vision and his design along lines that the student has spontaneously started.

34. Technical devices, such as perspective and chiaroscuro, or facts about nature, such as anatomy, should not be imparted, as a rule, until the student feels the need of them to enrich his design or add realism to his concept, or until the teacher has reason to believe that their use would be a continuous and progressive extension of the student's present activity.

35. Examples of other works of art, past and contemporary, should be shown to the student at the appropriate moment in his own development when he has spontaneously shown interest in the sort of problem with which the other work was concerned. He should not be shown this older work, however, too soon or with advice to imitate it exactly, but rather so that he will use it as a suggestion and aid in his own activity. For this purpose the teacher should be familiar with typical works of past and present art on the basis of their distinctive plastic forms, and be ready to bring forth a relevant example when appropriate.

36. Courses in the history of art are of great value for both appreciation and creation if rightly conducted. They should not emphasize, however, as at present, the names, dates and biographies of artists, the subject-matter, religious, literary and political associations of works of art. Rather they should aim to trace the history of forms and traditions in art, their origin, development, interaction, combination, differentiation, decadence, revival and modification, as shown in concrete works of art. Reference to the matters at present emphasized, if made at all, should be made only as incidental aids to the understanding of the history of art itself.

37. The chronological presentation of art is not, however, the only method of value, nor is it the best introduction to art; it is valuable rather as a review and coördination of ideas already made familiar in other ways. The presentation of traditional forms to the student should be coördinated with his own aesthetic growth, which cannot and need not be a recapitulation of the art history of the world in chronological order. The early forms of art are apt to be remote from the student's knowledge and interest, hence difficult to appreciate; even a reverse chronological order would be inadequate, since an earlier form (e.g., Greek) might be easier to appreciate than a later one (e.g., medieval).

38. The primary aims in the study of traditional art-forms should be: (*a*) To link up forms already familiar to the student with their prototypes and other similar or easily contrasted forms, thus preserving the continuity of the student's aesthetic growth; (*b*) to reveal as soon as possible, and to emphasize repeatedly, the common principles of all great art, and the few basic forms which have been of perennial interest to humanity. Then, as a secondary matter, can be shown the particular variations of these forms and principles made by particular ages, schools and artists, and the order in which particular tendencies have occurred in the past.

39. Thus the order of presenting traditional forms to the student should begin with those which are at once simplest and most easily linked with his own experience, and then go on to those which are, by reason either of complexity or remoteness from interest, more and more difficult to appreciate. The relative remoteness and difficulty of various forms, if they are appreciated plastically, do not depend upon factors of chro-



nology, religious and political systems, etc., but rather on the complexity and subtlety of the plastic effects themselves; thus an Egyptian statue might be more easily grasped than one of the Renaissance.

*G. The order should not be rigidly systematic.*

40. It is inconsistent with normal mental growth, as well as with the nature of art creation, to proceed with instruction in an atomistic or logically formal method, either analytic or synthetic. The proper beginning is not with the supposed elements in art structure, such as line, dark-and-light and color. The proper sequence is not to build up, in a strict order of increasing complexity, designs of one value in charcoal, then two, then three, then to add one color, and so on. The result of such an order is inevitably mechanical, and no work of emotional power can be so produced. Logical analysis and synthesis are retrospective works of science, and do not retrace the paths of imagination.

41. Art instruction should give wide scope to the unsystematic gropings, experiments and inconsistencies of unanalyzed impulse and emotion. Students should be allowed to experiment with color, line and light, and with easy or difficult media, in any order they choose. Analysis and synthesis should be constant phases of development, neither one predominating or extremely systematic. Analysis should and does occur whenever the student finds it helpful to dissociate a problem or a picture into its elements; synthesis occurs whenever varied images combine in his mind and on his canvas into a new union. Such analysis and synthesis in art construction need not and should not be made fully conscious, calculated and orderly. In art appreciation it may be without danger more fully carried out,

but an understanding of the nature of art will take note of its illogical and impulsive genesis.

42. As long as mental growth continues the mass of sensations, emotions, impulses and ideas which make up experience never becomes completely systematized, or needs to become so. Growth, in aesthetic and other functions, implies the constant taking in of new material, the exercise of newly developed powers. Organization of these materials and functions by reason is constant, with occasional periods of special effort, but it is always partial and tentative.

43. Aesthetic education should be along the lines of this normal growth, and not of any logical system. It should provide for the constant and continuous widening of horizons with constant partial organization of experience acquired. It should provide for continuous advance from easy to difficult beauty, from types of activity immediately pleasant for a child to types whose enjoyment requires experience, intellect and subtlety.

#### *H. The stages in art education.*

44. The first stage, including all work in primary schools, should be devoted to providing the child with experiences which he will immediately enjoy and which will call forth his innate powers of perception and feeling. Little attention should be given at first to relations, designs or formal arrangements. The procedure should be to provide the child with a wide variety of sensory stimuli, preferably such that they can be manipulated and experimented with. For example, he should hear the sounds of various instruments, simple songs and verses; he should see and handle various textiles, such as silk, wool and velvet, whose texture and color will immediately delight him

and which he can easily discriminate. He should play with and feel the properties of modeling clay, crayons, charcoal, colored threads, beads and colored paper, water-colors, without being asked to make them into organized structures of any sort.

45. Soon afterward he can begin to perceive and make different combinations of these materials. He can examine striped and dotted textiles, and then try his crayons in various groupings. This is synthesis of elements, but by trial and error rather than by system. It begins, moreover, with striking and obvious stimuli and relations. Subtler ones, such as tonal variations in a single color, or in gray, should come far along in development; they call for trained perceptions, and excessive attention to them weakens the grasp on more simple and powerful means.

46. Examples of the relations which constitute design, such as repetition and contrast of themes, can be pointed out to children at an early stage, without any reference to their names or abstract definitions. This can be done through music, games and the study of ornamental *motifs* in relation to each other.

47. Representation should also begin during the first stage; not of exact appearances, but of mental pictures of scenes, objects and events of present interest. Little criticism is necessary, since the main purpose here is stimulus to varied activity.

48. In the early stage no sharp distinction should be made between construction and appreciation. Both are aspects of the same aesthetic experience, and to some extent progress in each is aided by progress in the other. Art cannot be constructed without ability to appreciate beauty in nature, and this ability is increased by the revelations of art. Appreciation, on the other hand, should not be regarded as passive absorption,

but as imaginative recapture of the experience of the artist. One of the most effective methods of such recapture, and of the linking up of imagination (aesthetic or scientific) with reality, is to go through the overt motions of actual construction.

49. The second stage, comprising high-school work, should continue the process as begun, with no radical change. Here it is possible, however, to attempt more complicated and subtle forms of art and to examine such forms from art history. It is possible, also, to begin discussion of abstract principles of design and the reasons for preferences. Organization of work may be furthered by specializing on a particular medium for a period of time. Here, too, it is appropriate to analyze the distinctions between works of fine and industrial art, as well as their common principles.

50. The third stage, of college or advanced academic work, should involve considerable specialization. The main distinction, necessitated by divergent interests of students, will be into art construction and art appreciation. Only a few will desire to continue the actual making of works of art, while many will desire to appreciate it with wider range and finer discriminations.

51. Even within the field of appreciation an adequate college curriculum will provide for several subdivisions. There should be a course, required of all who intend to teach art, where art is considered in relation to psychology, philosophy, ethics, history and educational methods. There should be a general course on the history of art forms and traditions. There should be a course surveying and analyzing the work of contemporary artists in various fields. There should be opportunity to follow up separately in history and contemporary work various particular

branches of art, such as painting, sculpture, architecture, furniture and textiles.

52. Constructive work of this grade should include continuous use of one or a few selected media, and the intensive analysis of past and present art-works, especially those most relevant to the student's individual interests. Guidance by the teacher will here be at a minimum, and restricted largely to occasional suggestions when called for.

### *1. Practical steps in reform.*

53. To introduce these aims and methods with thoroughness would require a considerable reorganization of the public school system. It would require especially more teachers, with less work and more time for attention to individual pupils. It would require alteration of college entrance requirements, and the freeing of instruction in the fine arts from industrial and commercial methods. It would require an extensive change in course arrangements and in material presented.

54. But a worth-while share of the methods advocated here can be introduced with little or no modification of existing school organization, no increase of time spent on art, and no alteration in the scope or sequence of courses. The main requisite for intelligent art instruction is not change in the school system, but change in the spirit, aims and methods of individual teachers. Existing courses in drawing, manual training, the industrial arts and interior decoration can be preserved and substantially the same ground covered. The essentials of the plan advocated can be realized if each individual teacher understands the principles and some of the typical examples of the great art of all ages, and is not limited by the conven-

tional formulas of his own place and time; if he will undertake to stimulate initiative in his pupils and refrain from imposing rules that produce only a quick and specious skill.

55. But even to achieve this limited reformation two changes are necessary:

(a) School officials must refrain from tyrannizing over the beliefs and methods of teachers.

(b) Teachers' training schools must be so modified as to impart an appreciation of good art, and a knowledge of scientific methods in education.

# College Art Instruction: Its Failure and a Remedy <sup>1</sup>

By THOMAS MUNRO

## I. *General Neglect of the Subject*

IT is the intention of a liberal college, presumably, to give its students a general acquaintance with past and present civilization, and the ability to use this acquaintance for the enrichment of life, whatever special careers they may later adopt. There is little disposition among educators to question, in general, the importance of painting and sculpture in civilization, past and present, or the value of an ability to appreciate them.

Yet in the actual mapping out of college courses, the fine arts have received slight attention. By the austere standards of past academic generations, most art was of doubtful morality and respectability. Today, the ideals of scholarship and scientific rigor are still dominant, inspiring a vague hostility in the professorial mind toward anything tinged with emotion or unchastened impulse. In addition, the more practical demands of business and professional training are advancing an ever stronger claim in the parcelling out of time and appropriations. Even in the colleges most determined to be modern, the fine arts are neglected in favor of sociology, politics and economics. Thus there is little time for the enjoyment of plastic art or

<sup>1</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, May, 1925.



of music, and courses in literature are charged with almost the whole burden of developing the aesthetic side of an educated mind.

It may be safely said that at present no liberal college or university—American or European—makes a systematic attempt, based upon modern educational principles, to develop in its students the taste for visible forms of beauty, their ability to create such forms, or even to think rationally about them. Few colleges have any course at all on the appreciation of painting and sculpture. Still fewer give an opportunity for constructive work in these fields, or for contact with what is being done by contemporary leaders. In consequence, the supposedly liberal education of the college lacks one of its potentially most valuable elements. So far as his college training is responsible, the student goes into the world with a mental blind spot that impoverishes all his later experience. He passes by, or sees dimly and confusedly, not only the forms of plastic art, but those of all visible nature, and of all the appliances and furnishings that surround a civilized existence.

## *2. The Failure of Present Instruction*

What little work is now attempted in this field is largely mistaken in principle, and ineffective or harmful in its results. For example, painting and sculpture are sometimes briefly touched upon in a course on Aesthetics, given under the department of philosophy. Such consideration is usually entirely abstract, without observation of concrete examples. It is devoted, as a rule, in part to arbitrary delimitations of the scope and purpose of the particular arts, in part to arbitrary definitions of the sublime, beautiful, tragic, comic and other concepts. In part it involves a study of the his-

tory of aesthetic theories from Plato down, perhaps, to Tolstoy, with exposition of the standards of artistic merit according to these philosophers. The study begins and ends in the realm of abstract speculation. It consists mostly of memorizing, since intelligent discussion is impossible without either concrete examples or a psychological background. Hence it is dry, remote from art as a human activity, unattractive and unilluminating.

Courses in the History of Art, what few exist, are usually based on the names and dates of artists, and on a miscellaneous series of anecdotes of their lives and times. A few lantern-slides are shown, mostly of Greek statues and Renaissance paintings; but no systematic attempt is made to analyze the plastic forms of these objects, their effects of line, light, mass and color. Instead, comments are made on their subject-matter, mythological or biblical, their religious, literary and historical associations. A plastic quality is occasionally pointed out, such as flatness or modeling, symmetry or dissymmetry, naturalism or stylization. But its significance for design, its part in the total aesthetic effect, is rarely if ever considered. Each quality is merely another isolated fact, another bit of knowledge to be stored away. Sometimes the student is taught to identify the works of particular painters by peculiarities of subject-matter and tricks of technique, but without reference to the descent of traditions or their aesthetic importance. Occasional judgments of value, of course, are dogmatically interspersed, sometimes on the basis of Berenson's exaltation of the Florentine "tactile values"; more often on the basis of confused sentimental and moral predilections. "See the noble, devoted expression in that face," the student is told, or, simply, "this is graceful,"

"that is majestic," "that is beautiful." Embarrassing questions from the class are brushed aside with the clichés of academic criticism, or suppressed once and for all with the dictum that tastes are not to be disputed.

Such courses are practically always elective, not required of all students; they are generally reputed to be dull, and not to "get anywhere." Students as a rule elect them chiefly from a desire for something easy to pass, without much work to be done. No one takes them very seriously, and they exert no considerable influence on the thought and interests of the college world.

Here and there in large universities, there is opportunity for somewhat more intensive work in art. In connection with architectural schools, there are courses in the history of ornament, sculpture and mural painting. One or two university graduate schools are conducting fairly active research on the history of ornament and other phases of art, but this work is largely antiquarian and archaeological in spirit, with little bearing upon art as a living human activity. Elsewhere, much talk of psychological aesthetics is in the air, but the psychology involved is often dubious. There is at present a widespread faith in the value of accumulating vast masses of quantitative data from mental tests, and from apparatus for exact measurement. These methods are sometimes applied to problems of emotional preference; but they have little to do with the understanding, evaluation or production of actual works of plastic art. Practical courses in figure drawing, painting, modeling and applied decoration are given at a considerable number of universities, mostly as training for public school art teachers. Such courses in art construction are almost uniformly me-

chanical and conventional, based upon exact imitation of the object, along with a few stereotyped forms of composition and color design.

Even in progressive universities, instruction in art has lagged far behind most other subjects in adopting modern methods, and in the smaller colleges it has been, on the whole, a pathetic failure. It has turned out no creative artists, and, apparently, few people capable of writing or talking intelligently about painting or sculpture in terms of plastic form. Above all, it has not succeeded in arousing the interest of college students in art.

The reason for this failure does not, certainly, lie in any lack of potential interest and pleasure in the fine arts themselves, even for young men of college age and type; that interest has been proved by centuries of human experience. Does it lie, as the art professors blandly assume, entirely in the Philistinism and aesthetic obtuseness of the American student in particular? Or is something wrong with the college conception of art and how to teach it?

Without an actual trial of other methods there is, of course, no way to prove that college students are capable of serious interest and achievement in this field. But it is obvious that the sort of instruction just described gives little or no chance for the student to come in contact with good art, or to find out whether he could like it or not. A few lectures on abstract theory, a few glances at lantern slides, along with unconvincing dogmas and confusing anecdotes, would tend to deaden, rather than develop, a natural interest in plastic form. Without original examples the student cannot begin to realize, for instance, the possibilities of organized color, the most important element in the Venetian school and the whole of its development

down to contemporary art. Without even reproductions of contemporary works, he can form no idea of the possible meaning of art in the life of his own generation.

### *3. Needed Steps in Reform*

Once these faults are recognized the way to their correction is not hard to see. A necessary first step in most cases is the allotment of more time and equipment to the subject. Another is the securing of instructors who have had contact not only with art as a vital activity, but with modern educational methods.

The chief necessity for immediate reform is a change in aims and methods on the part of present instructors. Above all, the instructor should realize that his primary function is to awaken interest in his subject. The way to arouse this interest, as psychologists have long since pointed out, is to replace passive absorption by spontaneous activity, remote abstractions by concrete problems relevant to the student's personal interests. This implies, in art, allowing for initiative and experiment, natural feeling and impulse in dealing with works of art and the problems associated with them. The instructor's place is not to impart a particular kind of skill, or to recite facts to be remembered, but mainly to exhibit concrete works of art, originals if possible, and reproductions in such order and variety as to provide a basis for discussion and preference. If he comments and advises at all, which is perhaps less necessary than he supposes, it should be to clarify and assist in the forming of spontaneous preferences, by pointing out the artistic qualities inherent in the objects themselves; it should not be to impose his own standards or to confuse the student's direct experience with unnecessary associations.

The order of natural growth in aesthetic powers, on the whole, is from easy to difficult beauty, from enjoyment of the obvious, immediately pleasing sensuous qualities of objects to enjoyment of their more complex and subtle relations. Familiar concrete forms and situations, that have come within the student's own experience, can readily be given aesthetic appeal; those more remote and abstract must be gradually linked up with familiar ones, to provide for continuous growth. A traditional form, the work of an old or modern master, should be introduced, as far as possible, at a moment when the student's prior experience has reached a point where that particular form is relevant and easily assimilated. It should never be shown as an absolute standard of beauty, but as datum and suggestion to be used in forming independent standards. Art education, then, should be neither completely coercive nor completely anarchic; it should be guided mainly along lines that native preference and character indicate, but with a view to encouraging breadth and catholicity, as well as intensity of experience.

#### 4. *The Values of Practical Art Construction*

Modern educational theory stresses also the desirability of learning by doing. This implies in art not only active analysis and comparison of works of art, but experiment in practical construction with the media under discussion. Whatever arts are being observed, and criticized, whether painting and sculpture, interior decoration, ceramics, furniture, textiles or architectural design, some opportunity should be given for the student to try his hand, if he desires, at original production along these lines. This is rarely if ever done in the small liberal college.

Such a proposal may meet with the objection that it is not the function of a liberal college to train artists. The objection is irrelevant, since training of professional artists is not the main value of such practical work. It is true that the level of art might well be improved if some of its practitioners had enjoyed a genuinely liberal education, instead of the narrow training in craftsmanship given by professional art schools. (As to the present cut-and-dried college course, the artist is entirely justified in considering it rather destructive than beneficial to imagination.) It is not unlikely that in the college potential artistic talent might be found in students who have been unwilling to choose a professional course in art at the sacrifice of a general education.

But the chief value is that which all students derive, whatever their main interest, from the opportunity to try various forms of artistic expression along with their other work. College study is now largely a matter of taking in dry information, with little chance for practical activity. Class-room discussion, when encouraged, is some outlet for stored-up mental energy; literary composition is another, especially when choice of themes from the student's own experience is allowed. But many do not find the written word a congenial medium; this is especially true with boys of strong physical vitality, who grow impatient at poring over a desk. It is certain that many of them are driven to unproductive and unsatisfying outlets for ebullient energy, who could handle a chisel, a brush, or a cabinet-maker's tools with enthusiasm and ability. Without such practical work, moreover, all the appreciative side of art study tends to be more abstract, remote and uninteresting.



### 5. *Obstacles in the Way of Improvement*

The foregoing, in general, are the aims and methods necessary if college art work is to be brought into line with present-day educational principles, and a thorough consideration of their meaning will go far toward suggesting practical details. But there are several prevalent obstacles which it is well to face clearly in advance.

In the first place, the whole academic system of mass instruction, of marks, examinations and credits, of set tasks to be done and judged by arbitrary standards, is antithetic and destructive to the spirit of art. If instruction in art must conform to this system, it might better be eliminated entirely from the regular curriculum. Real appreciation and creativeness in art both require a type of individual feeling and action that cannot be exactly measured or appraised, a type of accomplishment that is not reducible to set tasks. A liberal college should be flexible enough in method to exempt its fine arts courses from the more or less rigid routine that operates elsewhere. Under the present system, of course, a student cannot be expected to spend much time on art without receiving credits for it toward his degree, and the credits now allowed are usually far from adequate. But exact grades for art work can never be reliable, and credit should be given rather on the basis of time spent. If the work is made interesting, there will be no serious problem of idling.

In the second place, the accepted standards of propriety and conventional "good taste" are apt to be invoked with especial severity against any departure from customary forms in art. The battles that have been won, in many colleges, for freedom of thought in science and philosophy, have still to be fought in

art. The instructor who attempts to raise fundamental issues, or to accustom his students to new and unfamiliar forms in plastic art, must expect to face the tyranny and ridicule of his colleagues and superiors, and frequently of his students themselves. No ideal system of art instruction can be introduced all at once, or go far ahead of the general level of college mentality and character. If in all other courses, literary and scientific, routine methods prevail, the art instructor can have little hope of instilling different habits in the short time allotted him.

In the third place, the student who enters a college art course is in the vast majority of cases ignorant of the fundamentals necessary for appreciation. The instructor can go but a short way in showing the significance of art and of works of art, unless he can count upon some general knowledge in advance, of both human nature and the intellectual heritage of humanity.

In the fourth place, the attitude toward art of the entering student is certain to have been partially corrupted by false teaching in the lower schools and in the outside environment. Ideally, one should be able to assume that by the time a student enters college he has gone through the phases of aesthetic development appropriate to primary and secondary schools. His natural delight in sensory stimuli and simple relations should have been early awakened and cultivated. He should have grasped, by habit and then by conscious analysis, the basic principles of design in plastic art, as seen in typical traditional forms. He should have acquired some power of visual imagination, some freedom in expressing it in ways satisfactory to himself, and some power to approach rationally the problems of value involved in such expression. His college work

would then proceed of its own momentum, to increasing specialization and a further rationalizing of his preferences in the light of history and psychology.

But on the contrary, the student has actually been exposed, during many plastic years, to the debased and tawdry works of popular taste; he has learned to expect of a picture that it be conventional in form, and interesting mainly by its story or by its patriotic, moral or sentimental associations. This habit has, in all likelihood, been confirmed explicitly by his primary and secondary teachers. From them he is only too likely to have acquired nothing except the idea that obedience is the first of virtues, with its corollary, that resignation or apathy is the appropriate attitude to take toward the school and all its ways. Thus the more vigorous college student, at least, has learned to regard the practice of art as something essentially soft, effeminate, mechanical, insipid, tiresome, remote from every normal interest. Great works of art, too, he has never learned to dissociate from medieval piety, or from other ideas equally remote and tedious.

There are, of course, exceptions to this attitude, occasional students of better home environment or schooling, who arrive in college with some experience of good art and an interest still undimmed. But on the whole, the other type is the problem with which the college teacher has to deal; habits must be unlearned, false beliefs corrected, perverted and enfeebled tastes cured and revived, before a vigorous appreciation of art can begin. These faults in preparation must, unfortunately, be for the present accepted as part of the college's problem. The fact, though regrettable, is only a particular instance of the general truth that education at every level consists largely of correcting the bad education of the lower levels.

## 6. *A Practical Course of Study*

The shortcomings of lower education, as mentioned above, make it obvious that college art work must compromise to some extent with the ideal. It will fail, to be sure, if as at present it succumbs entirely to the mechanical conventions of academic procedure. But it will also fail if it tries to go too fast, to break entirely with the academic world of which it is a part. It must conform to a reasonable extent with the mental habits and interests of the college student as he is.

The following course of study, therefore, is intended not as an ultimate ideal, but as a fairly practicable working basis.

(a) As prerequisite for the courses in fine arts, there should be a course in intellectual history, in which is shown the cultural development (including religion, philosophy, science and literature), of which the plastic arts have been a partial expression. There should be a course, also, in psychology or experimental logic, in which the thinking process is explained in relation to impulse, perception, habit, emotion and intelligence.

(b) Under the department either of philosophy or of fine arts, there should be a general course in aesthetics, very different in content and method from the usual present one. It should begin with aesthetic psychology, with a description of the aesthetic experience in relation to other activities of life; this involves an emphasis on the need of intelligent reflection and open-minded sensitivity to new experience. It should go on to a comparative study of concrete works representing various arts and schools of art, including music, literature, painting and sculpture. This phase of the study should be devoted to revealing, inductively, the principles of form common to all the arts, along with

the peculiar functions and limits of each art, and to working out hypothetically certain general standards of artistic value. Special emphasis should be given to showing the functions of art in past and present civilization; to showing that it has been and can be vigorous, healthy, human and practical in the broadest sense of the word; that genuinely good art has a value for the student himself and for the sort of people he respects.

(c) There should be a course in the history of art, devoted not to biography, subject-matter or historical associations, but to tracing the continuity and variation of traditions in plastic design. This implies analyzing the distinctive forms of the Egyptian, Greek, Oriental, Renaissance and modern schools, and of great individuals, to show what each contributed of permanent significance to the artistic heritage of society, how influences were transmitted, and how old forms were adapted to new subjects and interests. The course should be based on a copious use of concrete examples, including not only colored prints, casts and lantern-slides but visits to galleries where originals are to be seen.

(d) In this course, or as a separate course, thorough and impartial attention should be given to the work of contemporary artists, with original specimens so far as possible. The chief object here is to give the student a sense of the vitality of the art of his time, to develop his ability to break up narrow habits of preference and to work out by intelligent reflection his own standards.

(e) There should be a course in practical art construction, where marks and set tasks are at a minimum, where individual preference is given full scope in choice of medium, technique and standards of beauty. Free experiment should be encouraged, and the use of sub-

jects from the student's own experience, including his vacation travels and his other courses. The teacher's function here is not to guide actively, but to arrange conditions favorable to creative work, and to give suggestions when called for. The latter will consist mainly in referring the student to traditional works of art that are relevant to his own particular problems.

(f) In a larger college or university, there is need for several more specialized courses. One is a study of applied and industrial arts, to be linked up closely with the work in the fine arts, and to show how standards of utility may be thoroughly reconciled with those of beauty. Another is a group of small seminar courses for specialization on certain periods or branches of art, such as the Greek period, or modern sculpture. Another is a course for prospective teachers, to show the bearing of educational psychology and methods on the special problems of art.

In conclusion, it may be said that not the least value of the proposed reform in fine arts teaching would be its stimulative effect upon work in other subjects. A fine arts department, by the very nature of its work, should be a dynamo of imaginative energy in the entire college world, by its example destroying pedantic dullness and encouraging vitality. Thus the study of every subject may come to realize its potential aesthetic appeal.





*Section III*

CONSTRUCTION AND CONTROVERSY



## Foreword<sup>1</sup>

THERE is a view generally prevalent according to which construction and controversy are alternatives, between which on any occasion we are compelled to choose. It is true that what is called "constructive" criticism is usually admitted as allowable, but by this is meant comment on matters of detail, a recommendation of patching and tinkering that leaves essentials untouched. Anything that goes beyond this to advocate drastic alteration, and of course extirpation, of the thing criticized, is condemned as "destructive" and explained as a love of ruin or chaos for its own sake. This seems to us a profoundly mistaken view, and one especially calling for examination. Indeed, we believe that the Barnes Foundation's policy of branding as radically false and pernicious what seems to it such, offers the most hopeful method of eliminating the irrational and antiquated practices so strongly entrenched in influential art and educational circles.

An attempt to bring into existence something essentially new invariably finds the ground on which it must build already occupied. Neither ideas nor material things can grow in a vacuum; from the start they must compete for their right to existence with the ideas or things already in control of the field. Sometimes, but not always, they can be grafted on the old, and when they can a policy of intransigence is undesirable; when they cannot the only course is a simple struggle for existence. And since everything fights for its life, such a struggle cannot always be kept within the rules of

<sup>1</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, October, 1925.

decorum which regulates friendly association between individuals; but to consider decorum as the first necessity of debate is often to surrender a cause.

This is especially true when existing institutions are firmly established and surrounded by prestige which prevents any impartial examination of their right to exist. The attempt to call in question their validity is then treated as a piece of presumption, or else simply ignored. We all know that deeply-rooted habits do not yield to any merely abstract reasoning. Such reasoning is simply listened to at one moment and forgotten the next; nothing short of a severe shock can secure genuine attention to the matter at issue. An individual, for example, addicted to the excessive use of alcohol, will rarely or never give any real thought to what he is doing until the consequences of it are forcibly impressed upon him by such unmistakable danger-signals as loss of health or employment. Social institutions which owe their fixity largely to habit are in no different case. So long as the success of their workings is not challenged in a manner striking enough to arrest attention, the voice of mere reason beats upon deaf ears.

To attack in terms wholly free from ambiguity may thus be the necessary prelude to any fruitful discussion. Such attacks are frequently said to be "in bad taste." They are in bad taste if they spring from malice, desire for personal aggrandizement or any other motive than desire for the general good. If, however, all discussion that seeks to go to the roots of the matter, which does not assume the essential rightness of what is questioned, is in bad taste, then "good taste" is nothing but a weapon by which vested interests may fight any penetrating analysis of their prestige and privileges.

It is sometimes said that while criticism of institu-

tions is permissible, criticism of persons is objectionable and offensive. Defenders of established institutions, when they invoke this principle, clearly intend its benefits to be confined to themselves: the "subversive" critic must expect "personalities," and usually, indeed, vilification.<sup>2</sup> The principle, however, is in general as paralyzing as anything could be to all serious attempt at betterment of existing conditions. All institutions are directed and utilized by persons, and if they are noxious the fact is apparent in the effect they have on individuals, including the individuals who profit by their operation. This is the ground for the legal maxim, that all guilt is personal. Its practical justification is shown by the ineffectiveness of all law-enforcement, so long as no individual can be made responsible for anti-social acts. It is true that individuals are very largely what institutions make them, and that consequently it is unjust to single out an individual for peculiar condemnation when anyone else, faithfully serving the same system, would have done the same thing in his place. This, however, does not alter the principle that he who holds a position must accept responsibility for whatever the position involves. Criticism is thus illegitimate only if it charges the individual with personal offenses over and above those entailed by his place in the system.

<sup>2</sup> Nothing is more illuminating, to the student of herd-psychology, than the controversial manners of the professional conservative. Bernard Shaw lists, in his "Quintessence of Ibsenism," some of the expressions applied to Ibsen, his work, and his admirers by London dramatic critics in 1891. Among them are: "A gloomy sort of ghoul, bent on groping for horrors in the night," "Morbid, unhealthy, unwholesome and disgusting," "Absolutely loathsome and fetid," "Garbage and offal," "Muck-ferreting dogs." The list might be prolonged indefinitely; it might be paralleled by the epithets applied to Manet and Monet by the French academicians of their day, or, in a different field, by those to which the Abolitionists fell heir in our own country.

Criticism, however "destructive" in appearance, is always legitimate if it offers an alternative to what is criticized, and if it is free from animus. Whoever considers something wholly bad cannot without compromise of his convictions urge less than its total abolition. If that involves saying also that the activities of some individual have, in this respect, no justification for existence, the fact may be unpleasant, but the obligation is no less binding. In the long run, it is not even kindness to the individual to do anything else. The piercing of hollow pretensions is a humanitarian as well as an intellectual duty.

What prevents recognition of the fact is the current belief that no one should be subjected to searching criticism if his intentions are good. No more deplorable superstition could be found. The harm done by ill-intentioned persons is utterly trivial when compared with that done by those whose consciences approve their every act. No one doubts that crime and malice are deplorable and that they ought to be wiped out, but who cares to read a denunciation of criminals? The only anti-social acts which are significant enough to be worth discussing are those of men who are "doing their best," but whose best springs from demonstrably untenable convictions. The militarist, the religious persecutor, the defender of unintelligent subservience to mere custom and authority—these, who are not considered criminals at all, are the real enemies of humanity. Their guilt is shared by all who in the presence of unmistakable evils, take refuge in inertia or invoke prestige to stifle discussion. To refrain from bringing to light the harm done by well-intentioned persons is to resign one's self to futility.

It is in accordance with these principles that the polemics of the Barnes Foundation will be carried on.

We shall have no hesitation in calling in question the grounds for anyone's prestige, his exercise of functions for which he is unqualified, or, in general, the value of activities which there is good reason for believing to be pernicious. Such criticism is not necessarily intended to convey any charge of personal corruption or wrong-doing, as these terms are generally understood. We have no interest in individuals except as their influence is a force in education, especially in education in art. When it is such a force, those who exert it should not and cannot expect immunity from a candid appraisalment of their activities.



# Popular Fallacies in Aesthetics

The Aesthetics of Bernhard Berenson <sup>1</sup>

BY ALBERT C. BARNES

THE most influential contemporary writer on art is probably Mr. Bernhard Berenson; his views embody most of the characteristics of academicism and irrelevant sentimentalism. His four volumes on the schools of Italian art set forth a theory of painting ostensibly based upon psychological considerations made sufficiently concrete to serve as a guide for judgment. As a specimen of the best kind of psychology and of criticism of plastic art that the academic tradition has produced, his theory will repay attention.

According to Mr. Berenson, the essentially important qualities of paintings are four—tactile values, movement, space-composition, and color, though the last is much the least important. He says that the purpose of art is life-enhancement, that tactile values, that is, modeling which gives the effect of solidity, stimulate our conviction of reality by vividly suggesting the actual feeling of an object, and thus enhance our sense of life. He maintains that the representation of movement causes us to rehearse in ourselves the muscular sensations which would be involved in performing the act or assuming the posture which the picture presents to us. Hence by the successful rendering of

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *The Art in Painting* by Albert C. Barnes: Harcourt, Brace and Co., pp. 414-425.

movement, or of a posture which invites us to a reposeful muscular state, our vital energies are stimulated. Space-composition, in giving us a vivid sense of the extensity of the world about us, enlarges our personality and makes us feel that we are living more abundantly. In his earlier work, Mr. Berenson dismisses color almost entirely, but in the final summary of his aesthetic theory, at the end of his volume on the North Italian painters, he admits having underestimated the value of color, but still allows it only secondary importance. He writes: "Color is less essential [than tactile values, movement, and space-composition] in all that distinguishes a master painting from a Persian rug." From all this it follows that painting is at its best when it renders the human figure, and the additional reason by which this conclusion is confirmed is interesting. He says that all appreciation of art, all perception of natural objects, involves a projection of our feelings into the things we see, but in figure-painting alone is this not illusion, since feelings akin to our own do animate other human beings, but they do not animate trees, rocks, and mountains. In short, his conceptions are based upon the always untenable, and now obsolete, theory of "Einfühlung." No sound psychology has ever maintained that in perceiving an object we necessarily go through a process of internal mimicry of it, and find it agreeable or disagreeable according as the movements involved are or are not congenial to our muscles. Concerning the theory of *Einfühlung*, Bosanquet writes: "It has been supposed that when we take pleasure in a graceful curve, our eye is executing this same curve, 'that we feel pleasure in this movement, or in the ease of it, and turn this pleasure into a quality of the object whose outlines we follow.' Well, it simply is not so—the eye in following a curve moves

with jerks and in straight lines. 'The muscles are mere scene-shifters.' " <sup>2</sup>

If the theory offered by Mr. Berenson were true, any distortion of the human figure would invite us to attempt to make movements or to put ourselves in postures which our bodies could not possibly accomplish, and the effect would be objectionable to us. We would scarcely find pleasant our attempts to mimic the uncomfortable position of the nude in Manet's "Olympia," or the contortions depicted in the best work of El Greco. His theory rests on the misconception that art is essentially photography, and in this case, a kind of muscular photography. Incidentally, it may be remarked that the whole theory of Berenson is adopted by Professor H. S. Langfeld, in a book which shows on nearly every page a total lack of real aesthetic experience. It makes of art something completely comprehensible to a person who has had no personal or immediate contact with actual works of art.

In his explanation of "tactile values" Mr. Berenson exceeds the ordinary limits of sophistry. His emphasis of the fact that suggestions of touch give a note of conviction to our visual perception of an object, is only an elaboration of the platitude that the word "tangible" is a synonym for "real." It is undeniable that effects of solidity in a painting may add to the reality of an object, and so represent one of the innumerable ways in which our natural powers may be called into play by a work of art. But they have no such primary or unique importance as Mr. Berenson ascribes to them. To give them that importance is to fall back on the imitative theory of art and throw to the winds all considerations of design. For example, in the work of Claude, tactile values are very imper-

<sup>2</sup> *Three Lectures on Aesthetics*, p. 24.

fectly rendered, though with no damage to aesthetic value, since it is not by touch that we grasp the essential quality of landscape. Mr. Berenson's theory logically binds him to accept as great masterpieces the countless academic paintings in which tactile values are violently over-accentuated by painters who are merely skillful imitators. He shows that he fails to grasp the importance of the specific medium of an art and would make of painting something that could be at best inferior imitation of sculpture.<sup>3</sup>

In the light of theories so patently absurd, it is easy to understand his overestimation of Florentine painting as compared with Venetian, as evidenced by the very singular statement about Rubens: "In every other respect [than technique], he was an Italian: and, *after Michel Angelo, to say Italian was practically to say Florentine.*"<sup>4</sup> Rubens was assuredly much more Venetian than Florentine. Mr. Berenson's confusion of the values of painting with those of sculpture leads him to overlook altogether the plastic values that make up the real greatness of the painters of the Italian Renaissance.

By his emphasis upon space-composition, Mr. Berenson reduces relatively flat painting to mere pattern, since his conception implies that composition in the ordinary sense of the word, is relegated to a status outside the formal character of a picture. Light, except as an aid to modeling, is never mentioned, yet light as a pattern in itself and as a means of organiz-

<sup>3</sup> "The illustrator who communicates ideated sensations which compel us to identify ourselves with such virility, with such proud insensibility, with such energy and endurance, is an artist indeed." *The North Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, page 60. He is speaking of the Cosimo Tura. Our intention is not to contest his estimate of that particular painter, but his reasons for it.

<sup>4</sup> Italics ours.

ing a painting, was constantly used by the great Italians.

One of the gravest faults in Mr. Berenson's writings is his neglect of color. He regards it essentially as only a means of embellishing surface. Its structural and organic values are never hinted at, either explicitly or by implication, yet color is the plastic element on which the most important achievements of the artist depend. How important color is, has been indicated in our chapters on Color, on Giotto, Piero della Francesca, the Venetians, Rubens, Rembrandt, El Greco, Velasquez, Renoir, and Cézanne. It can hardly be questioned that a sense of color is the one thing which no painter of the first rank has ever lacked. It is not without significance that Mr. Berenson's volume on Venetian painting is almost entirely an account of the social and political conditions of the time, and of the literary qualities of the painters discussed. In the conclusion to his volume on North Italian painting he recognizes the need of amplifying his account of color, but he has made no move to do so in the nearly eighteen years since the book was written. It is evident that he has said substantially nothing about color, because his essentially academic theory has blinded him to what, more than any other element, characterizes painting as an art. Such are the consequences of thinking of painting in terms of sculpture.

Mr. Berenson's mechanical standards, and his reliance upon irrelevant sentimentalities in the judgment of paintings, are due primarily to his fundamental classification of the qualities in plastic art under two heads, illustration and decoration. Decoration he defines as "all those elements in a work of art which appeal directly to the senses, such as color and tone; or directly stimulate ideated sensations, such as, for in-

stance, Form and Movement." By illustration he means "everything which in a work of art appeals to us, not for any intrinsic quality, as of color or form or composition, contained in the work of art itself, but for the value the thing represented has elsewhere." He claims that in any given work of art these qualities vary quite independently of one another and he cites Raphael as great in illustration and, except as regards space-composition, comparatively inferior in decorative power; in Masaccio, he implies, the contrary is the case.

Such a classification represents the very essence of academicism, in that it assigns the values of a single organic whole to two separate and unrelated compartments. It omits the fundamental principle of art, the adjustment of form to expression, that is, of integration of the values of what is represented in properly plastic terms. He praises Raphael for the range and power of his imagination in reproducing classic and religious themes; but if we apply strictly Mr. Berenson's definition of illustration, that "it appeals to us for the value the thing has elsewhere [than in the painting]," then this representation of the themes of antiquity has *no* value, for painting. His definition of decoration, as the "intrinsic" appeal of a work of art, apart from all interpretations of subject-matter, implies that a picture is a combination of what is meaningless with what is irrelevant.

Mr. Berenson's reasoning ignores the facts that the form of a picture is always an embodiment of what the artist finds essential in some part of the real world, and that it is the distinction of the greatest artists that they give us what is essential and not what is adventitious; but there is no means of making a distinction between what is essential and what is adventitious un-

less we have in mind the object or situation represented. The artist gives us what is essential in plastic terms. Hence to judge his form we must have a clear grasp of the medium of painting, so that we can say whether or not it has been fully utilized—whether or not there has been overaccentuation or undue reliance upon any one plastic element. Art is expression, and the expression is always *of* something, and *by* means appropriate to the particular art in question. Mr. Berenson's isolation of these two aspects into separate compartments represents not an art judgment but the common human weakness that seeks to avoid a personal reaction in which we are ourselves obliged to go through the process of creative interpretation which resulted in the original experience of the artist. Psychologically, it is akin to that form of academicism in ethics that tries to judge a moral act in abstraction from the two essentials, the individual and the consequences.

In contrast to Mr. Berenson's implied view, we are contending that to appreciate a work of art, or any other manifestation of human instinct acting intelligently, we are obliged to put ourselves into the situation out of which the work of art sprang, and reproduce the artist's vision of it. This is a difficulty from which the academician shrinks; hence he resorts to the easy mechanical classifications. The shrinking takes the form of judging the factors or aspects in isolation, not as elements in an organic whole. It divides form from expression, just as it divides composition from color, and color from modeling, and in consequence it cannot judge any of them aesthetically. It is only when we have seen what grasp of the world the artist is undertaking to set forth that we can say whether his work is important as an embodiment of human values,



or whether he has succeeded in integrating the plastic means to make an intrinsically moving plastic form.

This criterion exposes the falsity of Mr. Berenson's estimate of Raphael's greatness even from the point of view of illustration. He writes: "The central Italian painters were not only among the profoundest and grandest, but among the most pleasing and winning illustrators that we Europeans have ever had." On the contrary, the cheapness of Raphael's means is reflected in the melodramatic character of his scenes, the softness and sweetness of his personages, the exaggeration of his spatial effects. His classic themes become mere suaveness, his religious themes, sugariness, when contrasted with similar themes rendered with the power of Michel Angelo, the dignity of Giotto, the other-worldliness of El Greco. Any deficiency in the ability to achieve plastic embodiment results in a loss of human values in subject-matter; examples of this are found in Delacroix, Böcklin and Millet. In Giorgione, Titian, Rembrandt, or Renoir, great plastic genius is expressed in forms which are deeply impregnated with human values, and these human values determine the proportion in which the plastic means are used, so that the forms cannot be appreciated or judged unless we retain our contact with what is expressed.

Mr. Berenson's classification entirely overlooks the important factor of decoration as it really exists in paintings. There is a general decorative texture in Paolo Veronese, in Rubens, in the Eighteenth Century French painters, and in Renoir, which constitutes an important ingredient of the aesthetic effect, but which is not particularly expressive of the essential character of the individual thing portrayed. When we say that Cézanne is stronger than Renoir, but that in Renoir there is a greater wealth of charm, we mean that in

Renoir there is present much of this decorative element that is relatively absent in Cézanne. That distinction is unintelligible according to Berenson's principles, since both painters have the intrinsic values which he lumps together under the head of "decoration." Nor indeed do his principles permit of any appreciation of either Renoir or Cézanne, because both of those artists can be understood only by realizing that they, like Giorgione and Titian, and indeed like Giotto, achieve their effects chiefly through the organizing power of color. To that fundamental principle he never even refers, and the long series of his judgments shows that he has never in any degree understood or felt the force of it.

Mr. Berenson's work deals not with the objective facts that enter into an appreciation of art-values, but with a form of antiquarianism made up of historical, social, and sentimental interests entirely adventitious to plastic art. It would be unworthy of serious attention except for the regrettable influence his writings have had in filling our universities with bad teaching on art and our public galleries with bad Italian paintings. The courses in art at practically all the universities and colleges in America are based upon the obsolete psychology, the unscientific method of approach, that make it impossible for students to obtain either a grasp of aesthetic essentials or a real and personal experience with works of art. The instruction offered at such institutions is a mixture of spurious sentiment and historical data, elaborated into a system that has no relevancy to either the plastic values in painting or the principles of scientific education. Even worse is the fact that this deplorable tradition is given currency among the general public by books such as Professor Langfeld's and Professor Mather's, which

offer in the name of public education in art something which has nothing to do with art or with education. This academic instruction, given both in the class-room and in popular books, is largely responsible for the confusion of values which has made the public the victim of sentimentalists and antiquarians who breathe with religious awe the names of great painters whose work they never understood.

Mr. Berenson has aided materially in the identification of the works of some of the early Italian painters by means of investigations that are primarily and fundamentally akin to those of handwriting-experts. Interesting as that work has been in itself, it has yielded no data relevant to an appreciation of the values that make paintings works of art. Indeed, the principal effects of the activities of handwriting-experts in the field of art have been bad ones. They have resurrected the names of a number of early, and very bad, Italian painters whose work the picture-dealers sell accompanied by an expert's certificate of authenticity; in other words, antiquity, not aesthetic merit, has become the guide in a traffic in the kind of pictures which George Moore calls "cock-eyed saints painted on gold backgrounds." The host of bad paintings in the public galleries of Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Detroit and other cities, and especially in the Johnson Collection in Philadelphia, show the sad results of the expert-dealer-author-university method of propagating counterfeit thinking and counterfeit art.

The especially lamentable feature of the whole system is that the fetish-worship is so entrenched and buttressed by prestige that it is a waste of time to suggest that a more rational method of studying art be employed. Recently, we made a first-hand study of the facilities, the personnel, the equipment, and the

practical results upon the students, in the department of art in one of the largest and best-known American colleges, whose courses are founded upon the kind of psychology and educational practices above analyzed. The revelations of the study were so representative of intellectual and educational disorder, of such widespread social and economic significance, that my colleague, Mr. Laurence Buermeyer, described the incident in his book, *The Aesthetic Experience*. On page 165 of that book Mr. Buermeyer writes: "Recently one of the American colleges applied for an opportunity to provide its students with first-hand acquaintance with a very large and representative collection of works of plastic art. The collection, in range and quality, is without parallel in America; its owner, however, considered that it could be fruitfully studied only by those possessing an intelligent conception of human nature and of aesthetic principles. Compliance with the request was therefore accompanied by the condition that the college should coöperate to provide such a background; the coöperation involved, on the college's part, no more than a statement of the instruction already given, a statement sufficiently detailed to make possible a plan for such supplementation as might seem necessary. The college itself was not asked to provide the additional instruction, which would have been furnished as a part of the collection's resources, nor was it asked to modify in any way its existing courses in art. Nevertheless, the information sought was refused, apparently on the ground that to give it would have involved an admission that the instruction already offered might not be all-sufficient. Thus are daydreams sheltered from the destructive action of facts.

"The incident is striking because of the extraor-

dinary contrast it presents between profession and actual practice, between the intelligent open-mindedness which may reasonably be expected of an institution devoted to the advancement of learning and education, and the somnambulistic adherence to precedent actually displayed. But it is not unique. It is a symptom of the intrenchment of vested interest and unchangeable habits which are as destructive to art as they are to life in general."

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## The Aesthetics of Frank Jewett Mather

By ALBERT C. BARNES

MR. MATHER'S reputation in the art-world depends essentially upon his activities in tracing the attribution of obscure Italian paintings. How far that criterion falls short of adequacy for his position of Professor of Fine Arts at Princeton University is revealed in his *History of Italian Painting*. A review of that book in the light of modern thinking and experience shows that it represents but another example of the obsolete psychology and unscientific method of approach operative in the courses in art in most of the American universities and colleges.

His book is composed almost entirely of biography, literary criticism, irrelevant rhapsodical effusions and sentimentalizings. There is a slender thread of reference to plastic qualities running through it, but the conceptions and standards revealed are banal in the highest degree. There is no attempt to set forth a coherent aesthetic theory, either in general or as applied to painting. Such judgments as do appear reflect an utterly stereotyped academic theory of design

which assumes that every painter is trying, or should try, to do the same things. In color, in composition, in drawing, in modeling, Mr. Mather assumes that there is one right way, and only one. In the whole book there is no indication that he recognizes the aesthetic significance of any of these plastic means; indeed, his statements about drawing, color, composition, space, convey no meaning that would enable a student to grasp a conception either of plastic form in general or the particular form that makes an individual an artist as distinguished from a mere practitioner of technical tricks. This initial blunder, by making design a fixed formula, eliminates personal expressiveness, and with it all true art.

No better example of the fact could be found than in the treatment of Piero della Francesca, who is castigated for the undramatic quality of his work. Of him, Mr. Mather writes: "His figures are finely constructed and beautifully placed, but emotionally unrelated. They merely exist rather splendidly, as do some of Manet's figures. Indeed, the warning of George Moore as regards Manet applies equally to Piero. It is futile to seek from him anything but fine painting." In saying that Piero's figures are "emotionally unrelated," he can only mean that they do not convincingly suggest any narrative that would stimulate the sentimental rhapsodies with which the book is surcharged in lieu of criticism of plastic qualities. In the same discussion, we find it said that Piero sacrificed color to atmosphere—a statement which shows that Mr. Mather utterly lacks eyes to see that Piero's silvery blue is differentiated into a wealth of tints which form a rich series of subtle harmonies that organize the paintings by means of color. The slightest grasp of the principles of design would have

showed Mr. Mather that Piero's coolness, the static quality of his line, his subdued color, are parts of an essentially detached, impersonal, yet individual design in which drama would be as out of place as would the strongly accentuated rhythms of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in Debussy's "The Afternoon of a Faun."

It is apparent that Mr. Mather has no conception of plastic design as anything apart from narrative or sentimental coherence. In commenting on a picture by Masaccio, he condemns as an after-thought two figures absolutely essential to the composition, the rhythmic unity of the picture; what is true of these two figures is that they have no part in the story. In Giotto, he uniformly prefers the triter, less significant compositional arrangement of masses to the more original and powerful; although he sees the sensuous charm of Giotto's color, he is utterly oblivious to its really multitudinous plastic functions, including that of tying together the composition. In illustrating Giotto's development with age (really a retrogression in originality and the forceful use of plastic means) Mr. Mather contrasts the ignobility of expression depicted in the faces of some Mohammedans in an early painting, with the nobility with which they are characterized in a later treatment of the same subject. This greater magnanimity to an enemy is taken as an indication of Giotto's growth in artistry.

In many instances, not even perfunctory attention is paid to plastic considerations. For example, an important element in Fra Filippo Lippi's design, in which he anticipated many of the latest developments in painting, is the non-naturalistic portrayal of perspective. In this the background, rendered with abundance of clear-cut detail, is made to appear as a screen, rising to the top of the canvas. The striking contrast,



combined with perfect harmony, between the figures in the foreground and this background, is probably Fra Filippo Lippi's most characteristic plastic achievement: it is due to his use of color, light, and rhythmic line. Mr. Mather, ignoring this pictorially significant aspect of Fra Filippo Lippi's work, tells us that he was "the first Italian painter to care greatly for the look of everyday people," that he caused the art of Florence for two generations to be "boyish and girlish." Of a particular painting he says: "The picture gets its peculiar sweetness from the gentle, girlish figure of the Maiden Mother, its quality of romance from the ledgy background watered by springs and spangled with modest flowers, its tang of reality from the chubby and stolid Christ-child and the boyish St. John the Baptist. You could almost see such a thing today along the shaded upper Mensola when a young Florentine mother has taken the children for a Sunday picnic." This is what passes for a scholarly analysis of plastic art.

But it is only when we reach subject-matter that lends itself to more rhapsodic treatment that Mr. Mather's discussion attains its most characteristic form. No single picture in all painting, perhaps, yields a richer harvest to the critic of plastic art than Giorgione's "Concert Champêtre." In it we see color of the utmost sensuous richness used to build up form, create atmosphere, and hold the picture together; masses arranged in deep space in a complex composition which is completely unstereotyped and yet perfectly unified; line which is rhythmic, sensitive, expressive but never melodramatic; light and shadow employed to vivify color, lend conviction to perspective and glow to atmosphere, and to enrich the general form with a wealth of secondary but harmonious designs. Of all this utilization of plastic means to achieve

a powerful design Mr. Mather says nothing; what he does say is: "My own reading is merely based on the contrast between the rustic and urban lovers, and an intuition that the courtier in peering so wistfully at the shepherd is merely seeing himself in a former guise. In lassitude, perhaps in satiety, beside a courtly mistress who is absent from him in spirit, there rises a vision of earlier simpler love and of a devoted shepherdess who once piped for him in the shade. The vision rises as his listless hand sweeps the lute strings in a chord unmarked by the far lovelier mistress at the fountain. The golden age of love, like Arcady itself, is ever in the past."

It is evident that literature, tempered with archaeology, absorbs the interest of Mr. Mather and prompts him to emulate, if not imitate, the rhetorical irrelevancies usually associated with Walter Pater's style in writing about paintings. As a compendium of biographical and historical facts his book is informative, and as a set of exercises in rhetoric it is entertaining for those who like sentimentality. But as an introduction to the study of plastic art it is worse than useless. It distracts attention from what is significant, and encourages the student of painting in the most pernicious of errors—that of confusing an emotional orgy with intelligent aesthetic insight. It is merely another means of perpetuating the confusion of values; it has nothing to do with art and is fatal to education.

### The Aesthetics of Roger Fry <sup>5</sup>

By LAURENCE BUERMAYER

IN the greater part of even the best contemporary writing on art and on aesthetics, there is an obvious

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from *Some Popular Fallacies in Aesthetics* by Laurence Buermeyer, *The Dial*, February, 1924.

defect. Either the writer's grasp of fundamental principles of psychology and logical method is unaccompanied by any first-hand experience of art itself; or his aesthetic perceptions, vivid enough so far as they go, are not illuminated by any profound understanding of the source of all perceptions—human nature. The union of general understanding and specific sensitiveness, which alone can yield pregnant insight, is impossible in anyone who is not at the same time a psychologist and a connoisseur.

No better illustration of this fact can be found than the critical writings of Mr. Roger Fry. It is impossible to deny that Mr. Fry is one of the most acute of present-day observers of painting; he possesses also a certain fund of psychological information; but the psychology is largely popular psychology, a set of half-truths superficially understood. They constantly come between him and the direct experience of plastic art to which his natural sensitiveness would entitle him, and which a juster understanding of general principles would make accessible to him.

To see the influence of Mr. Fry's psychology upon his aesthetics, it is necessary to consider at some length his exposition of both. They are set forth most systematically in his book, *Vision and Design*, in the chapters, *An Essay in Aesthetics* and *Retrospect*.

Art is not an imitation of nature. Its true nature can only be understood if we draw a distinction between the active and the imaginative life. We are conscious in both of a world of objects, but it is only in the active life that we are obliged to, or in fact *can*, do anything about them. In this realm the things of which we are aware contain a promise or a threat, they are the signals of events to come, events which

we may wish to promote or to prevent. To this function as signal or guide, however, many of the qualities of things are irrelevant. If the letters on a sign-board directing us to our destination are clear, we need not inquire about the board's shape, size, age or material. Such features are ordinarily overlooked; and so in general the world of practice is an abridged and abstracted world. In the life of imagination, however, there are no practical exigencies, and we are at liberty to contemplate objects in their concrete fullness. To embody in permanent form the world thus contemplated for its own sake is the purpose of art.

Similarly, actual objects occasion emotions, but the intensity and urgency of these emotions prevent us from giving them detailed attention. We speak of being "overwhelmed with astonishment," "stunned with grief," "convulsed with anger." In imaginative life emotions are called forth in a weaker form and because of our relatively greater composure and self-possession we are able deliberately to exploit them. Such clearly observed and enjoyed emotion, together with the object that arouses it, forms the content of a work of art and represents the consummation of the imaginative life. That the determining factor in the release of imagination is the absence of practical activity is shown by the fact that children, in whom the practical motive has not yet developed, tend to draw objects, not from nature, but in harmony with their own story-telling proclivities.

To perform its function properly, an object must have unity and variety. Unity, to give the maximum of clarity in presentation; variety, to secure the maximum of stimulation, to lend all the interest possible. But since objects in nature may have these qualities, a work of art must also display the evidences of purpose,

must indicate the feelings, the intentions of a conscious contriver. The sense of mutual understanding between the artist and the observer of his work is an essential part of the aesthetic experience.

An object is beautiful, in other words, when it is a purposeful synthesis of varied parts. But beauty has a wider and a narrower sense. An object is beautiful in the narrower sense when it satisfies the conditions of unity and variety. To be beautiful in the wider sense it must arouse the emotions, and do so in purposeful and orderly fashion. If the accomplishment of this involves the sacrifice of conventional beauty in the object represented (as in Rembrandt and Degas) the sacrifice does not impair the aesthetic value of the picture.

"Order" (unity), in so far as it promotes clarity of perception, consists merely of the balancing of the parts of a picture about a center line, which causes the eye to remain within the frame of the canvas. It effects such a presentation of the parts as to secure that each shall have a fundamentally harmonious relation with every other. This form of unity, with its correlative variety, is termed "sensuous," and with it must be combined emotional order and variety. These are secured by what may be called the emotional elements of design. They are, first, linear rhythm or contour; second, mass or inertia; third, spatial magnitude; fourth, light and shadow; fifth, color; and, a possible sixth, inclination of planes towards or away from the spectator.

All these qualities, with the possible exception of color, are characteristics of importance in real things, whence their emotional excitingness. They are, however, not particularly moving in isolation: it is their combination that lends force to them. This fact may

provoke the objection that since the combination of them is formed in nature, art is imitation of nature after all, to which the answer is that in nature the union of qualities is not such as to realize the maximum of effectiveness. This is to be had only in the artist's combination of them.

To sum up the relation of art to nature: there are to be found in nature at least occasional examples of fitness for the disinterested contemplation characteristic of art, but there is not the added consciousness of purpose that is involved in the aesthetic experience at its fullest. The elements and some of the combinations found in nature are legitimate raw material for the artist, but his reorganization of them may depart from natural patterns in any degree that his purpose may dictate.

So far this outline has followed the first of the two essays above alluded to. Mr. Fry's later views are embodied in the chapter *Retrospect* in which he makes some modifications of his theory. In the earlier view, it is assumed that the emotional response elicited by a picture depends upon the elements reproduced, whether literally or not, from the real world. Considerations urged by Clive Bell lead to the conclusion that what is called "significant form" is something over and above all represented material, something which may, none the less, arouse a genuine emotion. This, according to Bell, is the only truly aesthetic experience. From the point of view of art, all else is adventitious. The view leads, logically, to the justification of painting completely non-representative. Mr. Fry shrinks from this conclusion, since he is not prepared to dispense with representation of the third dimension; he is willing to admit, however, a pleasure in form, in

arrangement of line, color, and mass, quite apart from any pleasure in the thing represented. The question thereupon naturally arises: Does pleasure in the thing represented heighten the purely aesthetic pleasure, or is it irrelevant? The latter view seems the more probable, but the issue remains in doubt, and the definition of significant form which avoids passing definite judgment is that significant form "implies the effort on the part of the artist to bend to our understanding some intractable material which is alien to our spirit."

The foregoing is, in brief, Mr. Fry's argument. Its dependence at every point upon Mr. Fry's psychological assumptions is obvious. Since art is *not* imitation, Mr. Fry assumes that it cannot be defined with reference to the object represented; hence a psychological definition is necessary. This is found, first, in "imagination," regarded as release from practice; second, in exploitation of a rather subdued and detached emotion; finally, in conscious intent to transmit imaginative vision and emotion to others. In its later development, the theory is complicated by the conception of "significant form," which Mr. Fry cannot make up his mind wholly to accept or wholly to reject. The conception, however, sharpens the distinction drawn between "sensuous unity and variety" and "the emotional elements of design," and leads Mr. Fry to lean to the former as the chief constituent in aesthetic value.

It is not difficult to show that Mr. Fry's psychological principles are superficial, and that their net result is to lead him into the confusion between pattern and plastic form of which we have seen Clive Bell to be so conspicuous a victim.<sup>6</sup> In each of the cardinal points

<sup>6</sup> See *Pattern and Plastic Form* by Laurence Buermeier, p. 92.



of his theory, in his view of imagination, of emotion, and of the nature of form, Mr. Fry goes astray in essential particulars.

Imagination, according to Mr. Fry, comes into being when practical response to a situation is absent. Such absence may be a necessary condition, but certainly it is not a sufficient condition. Recent investigation in psychology has made clear the immense part played in life by what is called "daydreaming," i.e., the gratification of real wishes by imagined satisfactions. Daydreaming may go on in entire isolation from realities, or it may attach itself to them: we may picture ourselves as wealthy, powerful and famous in a purely imaginary world, or we may imagine the material things about us to be our property, turned to our purpose, made an instrument in our self-display. Such fancies involve a different sort of observation from that required in practical purposes: they arouse emotions which do not compromise us by their effects and which may be enjoyed for their own sake; they are, however, not an excursion into the realm of art, but a degraded form of practical self-indulgence. They constitute the resources of those too feeble to dominate the world, practically, intellectually or aesthetically. They can be had without effort and the end of them comes not with any real consummation but with boredom. Aesthetic imagination involves effort both in the artist and the spectator. It is active, not passive. Unfortunately, Mr. Fry's illustration of the child drawing things, not as they are, but as his fancy moulds them, actually suggests that what he has in mind is not aesthetic imagination, but daydreaming. A child's fancies, as is well known to all who have made accurate observations upon children, are usually most practical in type, even when they serve no practical end. They

relate almost wholly to the uses to which things can be put. A chair is something to sit in, a knife is something to cut with, and so on. Ability to conceive an object in terms of its structure or appearance comes much later: it is an accomplishment, not a spontaneous disposition.

Confusion such as this is particularly regrettable in an introduction to aesthetic theory, since so much of what passes for art, pictorial as well as literary, is a commodity manufactured for the consumption of day-dreamers. The melodrama—and most novels and plays, not to speak of moving pictures, answer to this description—is flagrantly constructed to this end: its sharp moral classifications, its invariable assurance of triumph to the characters embodying the conventional virtues, invite identification with the “hero” of the piece and enjoyment of the hero’s glories. It is no less obvious that the paintings of pretty girls and agreeable domestic scenes, which the public overwhelmingly prefers, are equally invitations to daydreaming. To say this is not, of course, to suggest that Mr. Fry confuses magazine-illustrations with works of art, but certainly his definition of imagination gives him no grounds for making a distinction.

The looseness of definition which facilitates the confusion has an important and disadvantageous effect upon the rest of Mr. Fry’s theory. Since all preoccupation with objects not dominated by practice is regarded by him as imagination, and yet not all of it, clearly, falls within the sphere of art, something more is required. This something is the intention to communicate the emotions which imagined objects arouse. Nature, we are told, though it may be pleasing to our sensibilities, falls short of art because it expresses no purpose to please us. What is not intended to be beau-

tiful is not really beautiful, since we cannot feel it to be the vehicle of a message from a spirit akin to our own. That art is always the bearer of a message, the *intentional* stimulus to an emotion, is the truth which Mr. Fry says Tolstoy taught him. The consequences of this view are surprising. If it is true, a landscape is beautiful if one believes in a God, the creator and architect of nature, but less so, or not at all, if one does not. A face is made more definitely the object of aesthetic appreciation by the application of cosmetics.

To discover the error involved, we must examine more closely the statement that art seeks to communicate emotion by expressing it. Mr. Fry gives an illustration, taken from Tolstoy:

"Let us suppose a boy to have been pursued in the forest by a bear. If he returns to the village and merely states that he was pursued by a bear and escaped, that is ordinary language, the means of communicating facts or ideas; but if he describes his state first of heedlessness, then of sudden alarm and terror as the bear appears, and finally of relief when he gets away, and describes this so that his hearers share his emotions, then his description is a work of art. Now so far as the boy does this in order to persuade the villagers to go out and kill the bear, though he may be using artistic methods, his speech is not a pure work of art; but if of a winter evening the boy relates his experiences for the sake of enjoyment of his adventure in retrospect, or, better still, if he makes up the whole story for the sake of the imagined emotions, then his speech becomes a pure work of art."

A few general remarks about the nature of emotion will serve as preface to the criticism to be made of this passage. The expression of emotion is always, originally, a motor reaction. When angry, we may turn

red and strike a blow; when afraid, turn pale and take to flight. Others, not directly affected by the original stimulus, may be contagiously affected by our emotion. By-standers at a quarrel grow tense and irritable, and a cry of fear only too often starts a panic. The expression of an emotion thus does communicate the emotion; but it does so because the movements made by the angry or frightened person directly induce anger or fright in the spectator. Art is an expression of emotion, however, with a difference so considerable as to constitute a difference in kind. It seeks to do what no simple and ingenuous emotion ever does, viz., reproduce the object which excited it. A man who has been insulted and is angry does not seek further affronts, nor does one in fear intentionally run additional risks. The purpose of the acts to which these emotions give rise is to rectify, change, put away or destroy the objects to which they refer. Only when an emotion is transformed under the influence of the aesthetic interest does it attempt to re-create the situation that brought it into being. It may then perform the function of communication, but in a way diametrically opposed to the direct transmission of ordinary emotion. It directs the spectator's attention to its exciting cause instead of moving him by its outward expression, by exclamations and gestures. The example of the boy and the bear precisely inverts the true order of things. To make such a story effective a true artist would describe, not his feelings, his sensations of goose-flesh, dryness in the mouth, quick and shallow breathing, and so on, but the suddenness of the pursuer's approach, his menacing aspect, the swiftness of his advance, obstacles to flight, visions of teeth and claws and flowing blood. Even if a described emotion conjures up appropriate images and thus provides the

listener with a concrete image, it is not *the* picture in the narrator's mind: communication has failed; the story-teller has not objectified his emotion or created an individual object. The emotion may be transferred, but it is not communicated.

The point has been discussed in detail because the separation of emotion from the object that excites it, and the transmission of the emotion to others, are so essential to Mr. Fry's conception of the purpose and content of art. At the bottom of his conception lies the assumption, already criticized, that the imaginative life, defined as consciousness of objects without practical responsibility, provides the material of art. Over and above this material, there must then be a purpose which, because the imaginative life is not in itself enough, is always to communicate an emotion. As against this view, with the difficulties we have seen it to involve, an alternative may be suggested. Not all play of fancy, not all non-practical observation of things, is "imagination," in the sense in which imagination is the basis of art. Only when we single out and observe things for the sake of their appeal to a specific interest, an interest which is directed to insight into the things represented, in terms of the medium of the art in question, do the things observed really form the subject-matter of art. This aesthetic aspect of things is ordinarily overlaid by qualities which have practical importance, but such qualities do not recede in our attention merely because they are at a particular instant unimportant. Our habit of conceiving things in terms of the uses to which they may be put dominates us as a rule even when we enjoy a respite from the need to be up and doing. To conceive, to see, the world from a detached and spectatorial point of view is itself a definite habit, involving a continuous readjust-

ment of other habits, a fact which explains the expenditure of energy required for genuinely aesthetic contemplation. This is true when we are contemplating either nature or works of art.

What is needed, in addition to this persistent and active interest in the aesthetically appealing aspects of experience, to make the artist? Not, as Mr. Fry suggests, primarily a purpose to communicate with our fellows, to share an emotion. It is only by a figure of speech that we can talk of the emotion as anything in a work of art additional to the work's content. The emotion is present only in what is portrayed, in the selection of detail and form of organization; thus, and only thus, can a picture be said to embody emotion or purpose. And communication seems rather a collateral result than the primary purpose of the artist. Art, if this is true, is less a message than a revelation: a revelation primarily *to* the artist, and only secondarily *by* the artist, of the beauty actually or potentially in things. What essentially distinguishes the artist is not ability to make himself intelligible to others—this is the definition of craftsmanship—but the ability to see more clearly and profoundly than the average man the aesthetic possibilities of the world about him. These possibilities may not be realized in actually existing particular things, and their revelation may consequently compel modification or distortion of the actual; but the purpose of the modification is not, as Mr. Fry asserts, to leave the stamp of humanity, of a spirit kindred to the observer's, upon the work; it is to make a more adequate revelation. It is true, doubtless, that we enjoy finding a kindred spirit in the artist, but the enjoyment in appreciation of art at its best may be less that of recognizing likeness than of recognizing unlikeness, less a discovery of ourselves in

another than expansion of our own mind through the profounder vision of another's. "The light that never was on sea or land" is not an infra-red or ultra-violet ray, hitherto inaccessible to human vision. It is the light of our familiar world which we had seen only through a glass darkly, but which the artist has made us see face to face. It is this transformation of nature which supplies what justification there is for Mr. Fry's sharp distinction between the beauty of art and the beauty of nature.

The case seems precisely similar to that of the scientist. He also has a purpose, he creates something, and he communicates something. But his purpose is revealed in the content of science, his creation is at the same time a discovery, and his communication is secondary and incidental.

In his treatment of form, Mr. Fry falls into errors no less serious. In his separation of the "sensuous" and the "emotional" elements of design, he appears to be on the track of the legitimate distinction between decorative pattern and the structural or expressive form in which an artist expresses his personal and penetrating vision of the essences of things. But there is no reason for limiting pattern to composition, to the exclusion of line, light and color, and Mr. Fry's uncertain hold on the distinction in question is evident from the fact that he so readily succumbs to Clive Bell's reduction of all form to pattern. Although Mr. Fry does not explicitly take sides with Clive Bell on this point, his essential agreement appears in his treatment of Seurat in the *Dial* of September, 1926, and of Cézanne in the *New Republic* of August 5, 1925.

His comments on Cézanne refer almost exclusively to the pattern to be found in Cézanne's paintings. He



notes the dignity, the reserve, the austerity, to be found in Cézanne's style, but these observations are the commonplaces of contemporary art-criticism, and have little to do with specifically plastic criticism. He notes also the rectangular simplicity, the recession, at right angles, of planes parallel to the plane of the picture, in contrast with the diagonal organization of El Greco's paintings; this, except for the reference to the third dimension, is almost entirely a matter of pattern. Over and above this, he devotes himself almost exclusively to comment upon the multiplicity of strokes of pigment, the vast variety of subtle gradations of color out of which Cézanne built up all his more extended color-areas. The infinitude of this variety, plus its coördination, are what, he says, constitute Cézanne's "immense richness of aesthetic content."

Two things are notable in this analysis. First, it reduces the characteristic quality in Cézanne to an elaborate color-pattern, and this is not, in his account, related to Cézanne's characteristic manner of organizing space. Nothing at all is said of the use made by Cézanne of the delicately modulated color-scheme to give, with a minimum of modeling by light and shadow, the solid massiveness of objects, and their rhythmic organization in deep space. Of the correlation, to this end, of distortion with the use of color, nothing at all is said. The rendering of space and solidity, with a power comparable to Michel Angelo's, in terms of subtly-used color, and in addition to this the realization of convincing individuality in particular things in a degree worthy of Rembrandt or Velasquez, is Cézanne's distinctive plastic achievement, but it is an accomplishment to which anyone concerned primarily or exclusively with pattern must necessarily be blind.

Second, what Mr. Fry says of Cézanne's use of

color, its derivation from the impressionists and its advance beyond them in variety, power and freedom from literalism, is equally true of Renoir, and especially of Renoir's later works. Merely from the point of view of richness of color-chords, and their combination into a satisfying decorative unity, Mr. Fry's eulogy is *less* applicable to Cézanne than it is to Renoir: the distinction between the two painters, the fact that Renoir's employment of color is the more distinctively decorative, is invisible to Mr. Fry because of his neglect of the distinction between pattern and truly expressive form. This is not to say that Renoir failed to catch the spirit or essential quality of things, but the essential quality, as he saw it, was more obviously natural, more joyous, more spontaneously appealing, than it was in Cézanne, therefore more fittingly set in a context of rich and brilliant decoration. No considerations relating merely to decorative pattern, in brief, are sufficient to account for either the distinctive quality of Renoir and Cézanne, or of the characteristic difference between them.

From the foregoing examples it is apparent how grave are the consequences of error in fundamental aesthetic and psychological principles, and how immediately such error is reflected in blindness to the specific qualities in individual works of art.

# Art Teaching that Obstructs Education<sup>1</sup>

By ALBERT C. BARNES

WE have been requested by many teachers of art in public and private schools, colleges and art academies throughout America, to make and publish analyses of some of the existing theories and practices with which teachers have been saddled by school authorities. The teachers themselves know how far many of the courses are from conceptions of art or education that could possibly be considered as intelligent; but they are helpless to rid themselves of the incubus so long as custom, unanalyzed prestige and lack of organization among teachers continue to prevail. What most of these courses do is effectually to stifle both self-expression and appreciation of art. The best they can do is to furnish mere formulas for people who paint bad pictures, perpetuate ugliness in the industrial arts, promulgate outworn principles of pedagogy, and thus erect almost insuperable barriers to that development of individual intelligence and the rational enjoyment of life, which are the chief purposes of education. The application of scientific method will be made to various systems which have considerable vogue in the teaching of art in public and private schools.

## The Denman Ross Method

THE theories of Denman Ross on art instruction are contained in two books. The first, *A Theory of Pure*

<sup>1</sup> From *Barnes Foundation Journal*, May, 1905.

*Design* (1907), aims to show how designs can be built up out of various arrangements of dots, lines, angles, geometrical figures, values, hues and intensities of color. The second, *On Drawing and Painting* (1912), summarizes this theory and supplements it with many hints on preparation of paints, brushes and canvas, and with comments on past and present schools of art.

Three qualities in these books make a specious appeal to the average reader. One is the semblance of scientific clarity and order, presented by the step-by-step procedure from simple to complex, and reinforced by the impressive geometrical diagrams, tables and abstract symbols. Another is the ostensible dealing with purely plastic qualities instead of subject-matter. A third is the reiteration of high-sounding platitudes, expressed with many capital letters, on the value of Art, Truth, Beauty, Harmony and Order. The author pays verbal tribute to the need for variety, interest, personal creativeness, etc., but shows in his specific applications of the theory that these qualities appeal to him far less than Order, which is the one great ideal.

In his conception of "Order" he has the scholastic reverence for rigorous, systematic training, for leaving nothing at loose ends, securing perfection at every step. The personal vision is to come after years of strictly regulated routine, when the student has become master of the "fundamentals." Most emphasized of all the methods is the use of "set palettes," which consist of forty-eight different arrangements of the colors according to value and intensity. The student is told that for his picture to be harmonious, it must be painted in one of these palettes, without departure from it. He must learn to apply the paint in regular order, as

he would the tones in the musical scale. That is, the student's natural tendency to self-expression is, at the very start, effectually inhibited by dogmas which upon analysis are found to depend upon a misunderstanding of scientific method, a false analogy to music, and a false idea of the psychology of artistic creation.

The resemblance to science is entirely formal and totally misleading, for Mr. Ross is clearly a man who has never grasped the meaning of scientific method. He confuses the clear-cut distinctions, the precisely formulated laws in which the results of science are stated, with the tentative, groping thought and experimentation by which the essential work of science is carried on before clarity and system are attained. The result is that in the Ross method the student is presented with a set of sharply defined conceptions which, because they correspond to nothing concrete in his experience, are remote from his interests and incapable of arousing them. Such a misconception of the real nature of science and its use as a model sets a false ideal, and would exempt this ideal from criticism by surrounding it with the immense prestige of science itself.

Such a procedure is inevitably pernicious because art cannot be so systematized and forced into formulas. The alleged "laws" are not laws at all, but premature, merely hypothetical generalizations, which not only have no warrant in experience but make experience, in any accurate sense, impossible. They correspond not to the laws of chemistry, but to the laws of phrenology, or to the sure cure for cancer. The so-called analytic method, employed in the teaching of science, has long since been recognized as bad pedagogy; employed in the teaching of art, it is also charlatanry. Absolute rules for color-combination, for composition, for draw-

ing, merely tend to perpetuate threadbare conventions, and to deprive art of everything fresh, living, or distinctive.

The feebleness of Mr. Ross's grasp of aesthetic realities is further testified to by the exaggerated correspondence which he assumes between sounds and colors. This correspondence does not exist; to assume it is to betray a leaning toward the exploded fallacy of colored hearing, and to all the pseudo-scientific aesthetics which underlies program-music and the other confusions of the values of the different arts. Mr. Ross's book, incidentally, betrays the limitations of his musical knowledge. All absolute "laws" of harmony have been obsolete at least since Beethoven, and perhaps the greatest contrapuntal achievement in modern music—the prelude to "*Die Meistersinger*"—was declared by the academicians of two generations ago to be an outrage against all the laws of counterpoint. Nothing is more instructive than the inability of the academician of every age to see that what he worships was branded as anarchic and subversive by his fellow-academicians of an earlier day. Manet, Renoir and Cézanne, denounced as anarchists by the academicians of the eighteen-eighties, are among the most prized artists in the Louvre today.

The Denman Ross method reflects an ignorance of human nature which is as profound as his ignorance of science and of art. The idea that the spontaneous expressions of human nature can be restricted to a few narrowly charted channels belongs essentially to the faculty-psychology which any competent psychologist since Darwin would have blushed to be detected in promulgating. The possibilities of legitimate expression of human nature are endless; all progress depends upon their realization, and there is no way of discover-

ing in advance what they may be. It is only by experiment that they can be revealed and only by sympathetic imaginative effort to enter into the unique purpose of the individual can they be judged. The "Order" which Mr. Ross commends, and which is the cardinal principle of his system, is, psychologically, a method for repressing any genuine experiment. Far from liberating the student or the artist, it puts him into chains. The suggestion that *after* long years of routine, of obedient imitation of models, personal expression may properly find play, is simply amusing; it means that firmly established habits of subservience are the fitting preparation for initiative! The performances of the academician himself are the best testimony to the absurdity of this.

The proper sequence is precisely the reverse. The student should not be told dogmatically at first to follow the example of others; he should be encouraged to try something for himself, and then be shown how the example of others may help him. No intelligent person denies the value of traditions, but just as they are of the greatest value when used as servants, so they are most profoundly pernicious when enjoined or accepted as authoritative laws. If they are to be used intelligently the element of mere convention and inertia in them must be discarded, and this element has always been revealed by their progressive purification in the hands of successive painters.

That Mr. Ross is pathetically incapable of grasping the essence of the traditions is conclusively shown by his judgment of painting since 1870. He writes: "The Impressionist painter has the love of Truth, but having little or no knowledge of his art he is never able to leave out anything that he sees, or to add anything that he cannot see." Thus to deny to Manet, Monet, Sisley, Pissarro and Renoir a sense of design, a capacity for



selection and elimination, a fresh vision of plastic realities, and equally a grasp of the great traditions of the past, is to confess either to total ignorance of their work or else to blindness so egregious as to debar anyone from having any opinion on art at all. So also of the other statement: "The Post-Impressionist tells us that he proceeds to express himself regardless of influences, precedents, examples and traditions. His aim is to exhibit himself." Criticism in terms such as these of a movement which included Cézanne requires no comment.

In short, the praise of "Order," which everyone admits to be a virtue in art, turns out to be a praise of the narrow, pedantic, school-masterly kind of order into which the author's own mind has crystallized. It is the antithesis of true art, true science and true education.

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### Dynamic Symmetry<sup>2</sup>

THE theory of "dynamic symmetry" as the fundamental principle of plastic design, and the method of painting based upon it, do not merit serious consideration except for the light they throw upon current opinion and practice in the realm of art and aesthetics. The method was originated by the late Jay Hambidge and is in use in many schools, including the New York School of Fine and Applied Art, with its thirteen hundred pupils and its many branches and connections throughout the country. It has also influenced the work of a variety of painters popularly regarded as artists and a considerable number of persons in authority in education are disposed to take it seriously.

<sup>2</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, October, 1925.

These facts confer upon the method considerable sociological importance.

Mr. Hambidge regarded himself as the rediscoverer of the secret of Greek aesthetic design and believed that he thus anticipated another Renaissance. He intimates that in "dynamic symmetry" science and art are auspiciously wedded at last, and the means of transmuting base metal into gold is delivered to men. What his theory lacks in originality is compensated for in simplicity and naïveté. He writes: "Lines, angles and curves are regarded merely as defining areas which compose the units of a map-like arrangement within the boundaries of the picture-frame or the canvas stretcher." In other words, his plan consists in reducing the composition to a flat pattern in which the chief masses are outlined and placed with reference to each other by means of a series of rectangles. For the construction of these rectangles an extensive set of mathematical formulas is provided. That is the method—that, and nothing more. In short, Phidias, Praxiteles, Giorgione, Rembrandt, Cézanne and Matisse had a box of tricks which any person familiar with the use of cube roots can apply and produce great works of art.

The arguments offered in its behalf are, first, that much of the art of the Greeks lends itself to analysis in terms of the ratios given; second, that the method facilitates the enlargement of sketches, which is required when they are transferred to the final canvas; third, that it has proved useful to painters who have won prizes at exhibitions. The reduction of all pictorial design to flat pattern is defended on the ground that the use of deep space is a descent of art into photography!

To state arguments such as these is to make debate superfluous. Yet his claim to "logic," to liberation of

creative energy, to avoidance of anything like a "studio-trick to cover up poverty of thought," is made so consistently and so confidently that the unwary may be taken in, and it is therefore worth while to indicate how grotesque the claim is. The initial reduction of what in a painting makes it aesthetically significant—that is, pictorial design—to flat pattern, to mere placing of line and area, disqualifies at the start everything that follows. The isolation of the elements in plastic form from one another and from the form as a whole is the aesthetic sin from which spring nearly all the aesthetic vices. There is no integrity in art unless all the means at the painter's disposal are conceived as subsidiary to the effect intended. If the flat pattern of a picture is treated as something which can be fixed independently of, e.g., the color, the result is as disastrous as that of separating plot and characters in literature or harmony and melody in music. Unless composition, drawing, color and light are felt from the start as aspects of a single plastic form, they are inevitably and necessarily just such "studio-tricks" as Mr. Hambidge professed to repudiate.

The preliminary assumption that the design of a picture is to be regarded as a flat pattern<sup>3</sup> is made by Mr. Hambidge dogmatically, although there is a show of argument in its behalf. Giotto and the painters of Greek vases are adduced as examples of the artists who avoided perspective because of its "photographic quality," in total disregard of the fact that the painting of vases is really a form of illustrative decoration and is not representative of plastic art at its best, and that Giotto's use of perspective in an original manner was one of the principal means of obtaining striking

<sup>3</sup> Of course a flat pattern may have its own aesthetic value; but to make this value fundamental in plastic art is to reduce all painting to the status of wallpaper or rugs.

and individual aesthetic effects. Although Giotto did not portray realistic perspective as we know it, the effect of three-dimensional space is subtly indicated by such means as color. However, since this and other plastic functions of color escape Mr. Hambidge's formula, he forcibly excludes whatever makes the method inapplicable, and his argument here is obviously perfunctory.

If it is logical to make a dogmatic assumption violently in conflict with the first principles of the subject under discussion, then Mr. Hambidge's claim to be logical is justified. His claim is frankly based on the impressive array of mathematical formulas by which the rectangular patterns making up the groundwork of a picture are to be constructed. But to confuse logic with the simple and, in this connection, irrelevant use of mathematics is, at the present day, simply naïve, however awe-inspiring it may be to the uninitiate. When it is said of an artist that he "prefers to think out the arrangement of his pictures," what is meant, of course, is that such a person prefers calculation to sensibility or imagination. And, since calculation is easy and imagination hard, any such proposal to make the production of art possible to people who can learn formulas, but who lack great endowment, is sure to meet with general acclaim.

It is amusing to observe how the clichés of modern aesthetics may be appropriated, in perfect unconsciousness, by those who have not the faintest conception of their meaning. Mr. Hambidge, forgetting that he had just joined in the familiar reprobation of the ideal of copying, justifies his mathematical method by its success in analyzing and reproducing the forms found in nature! Just so, after deploring the subject picture, he congratulates himself because his method

had proved useful to George Bellows and Robert Henri, whose popularity and ability to command the high prices which he finds impressive are due chiefly to the obvious and appealing subject-matter!

It is by the fruits of "dynamic symmetry" that we may know it. Miss Herter, in making use of it, "felt no embarrassment at any stage of the painting." Which of us does feel any embarrassment in repeating the multiplication-table? But the climax of absurdity comes in the fact that the method has been useful to George Bellows and Robert Henri, painters of pictures which reveal in every lineament a complete dearth of personal vision, of imaginative originality, whose chief stock-in-trade consists in the use of other men's ideas and methods. It is not surprising that the method should be commended by such men, or by the critic of the *New York Times*, in a review quoted by Mr. Hambidge, in which every sentence throbs with pleasure at the sight of little children obeying authority and never making any choices of their own except between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. "The mischievous notion of 'art for art's sake' is disposed of by this clear, precise method." Surely this sentence would more precisely express the critic's meaning if the phrase "for art's sake" were dropped out of it, for art in any form is abhorrent to newspaper critics.

In brief, it is quite obvious that Mr. Hambidge was a man who had no real aesthetic sensitiveness, and no idea what an understanding of art could possibly mean. In the art of the past he missed all that is virile and distinctive—all which is not consecrated by authority and easily included in his formula. Even in the field from which he says his theory is drawn—that of Greek sculpture—he misses the significance of the great archaic period. His aesthetic theory, as his quotations

from Denman Ross show, was a set of platitudes, some of them true, some false, but none of them really grasped. His ideal was the cooked-up picture, in which threadbare devices are feebly reshuffled for the delectation of the half-educated. It is represented by such a painter as Leon Kroll, whose "youth and freshness" are entirely a matter of pretty subject-matter, and whose work is plastically trite and stale in the last degree, an imitation of the mannerisms of other men's art. For the production of such painting "dynamic symmetry" represents a useful tool, a means of reducing still farther anything like individual perception. It is like an adding-machine, serviceable when mechanical problems are in question, without significance for genuine thought or creation, and when used as a substitute for them actually pernicious. It is a method to construct a skeleton and leaves entirely out of account the content that makes a work of art a living expression of an individual mind and soul.

The secret of Mr. Hambidge's mind and personality is revealed in the pleasure he took in the prices paid for pictures constructed in accordance with his method. Success of this sort means success in giving the public what it wants, in conforming to the standards generally accepted. These standards, which find the boundary of their authority at the point where art begins, Mr. Hambidge never seriously questioned. Essentially he was a Rotarian instructing Rotarians. He desired to think and feel like the crowd, only more conspicuously so, in order to be the crowd's leader. To those who have discovered the husk of art but not its kernel, he offered a recipe for making chaff look like wheat. His method corresponds to the devices for memory-training, for strengthening the will, for cultivating personality, which we see advertised in the magazines.



The complimentary letters published in his book on *Dynamic Symmetry in Composition* are chiefly suggestive of testimonials to patent medicines; if we refrain from characterizing them as bad taste, it is only because Mr. Hambidge was too naïve to be judged by other standards than those which we apply to children. For the same reason it would be ungracious to call his system charlatanry—his first imposition was upon himself. There is nothing in his system that deals with the grasp of essentials in a subject and their presentation in that individual form which is characteristic of all true expression, of all that is entitled to be considered as art. By a flagrant abuse of the meaning of "logic" and a transfer of the values of mathematics to a field where they have no real significance, Mr. Hambidge built up an elaborate system of mechanics that enables people with no imagination and no aesthetic feeling to produce works of counterfeit art that win prizes and sell for high prices. The psychological principle at work is precisely the one of hypnosis:<sup>4</sup> and that is always possible when art and science are couched in high-sounding formulas and their prestige-value brought to bear upon people in whom sentimentalism, emotionalism and lack of individuality function as substitutes for individual experience and intelligent thinking. The system is, therefore, not a matter for the consideration of artists and aestheticians, but for the sociologist who deals with questions of economic waste occasioned by ignorance of the first principles of rational thinking and of personal and significant experience. The existence and vogue of such a system shows the imperative need for a more popular grasp of the rudiments of educational theory and practice which

<sup>4</sup> The slogan "dynamic symmetry" is the equivalent in art of the hypnotic word, "Mesopotamia."



have been current in informed circles for more than twenty years.

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### The Pach System <sup>5</sup>

A CONTRASTING phase of contemporary education in art is represented by the work of Walter Pach. Mr. Pach's writings on art and his lectures in museums, to women's clubs and to art associations throughout the country, are among the means by which art is presented to those who, like the characters in Mrs. Wharton's story, *Xingu*, "pursue culture in crowds, as though it were dangerous to meet alone." In the broader sense of the word, all such work belongs in the category of education: it is one of the forces by which public taste is moulded and standards in art are given currency in the public mind.

Ostensibly, Mr. Pach's purpose is to wage war upon academicism. His book, *The Masters of Modern Art*, is a survey of modern painting in which the Nineteenth Century is briefly reviewed as the prelude or background to contemporary work. Such a treatment involves both the tracing of traditions and the evaluations of them as contributions to art and makes possible an estimate of Mr. Pach's historical sense as well as his aesthetic theory.

His abstract statements of theory consist chiefly in a repetition of what has been current in well-informed artistic circles for the past twenty years. For example, academicism is thus defined: "The periods of decadence are those in which man is too weak to perceive new aspects of the world, when he can only repeat expressions of the past." In addition, Mr. Pach pays

<sup>5</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, October, 1925.

verbal tribute to the continuity of all great art, to the need of a personal use of traditions and to the truism that the purpose of painting is to interpret reality both imaginatively and plastically. He states also the necessity of discussing pictures in plastic terms—color, line, light, space—although he makes no real attempt to go into finer points of plastic criticism based upon the objective, demonstrable use of the plastic means. In short, he marshals an array of platitudes that might lead the unwary to believe that Mr. Pach's aesthetics is sound and real and that his judgments of paintings are based upon personal experience.

The value of abstractions can be tested only by application; otherwise they correspond to the words the schoolboy repeats by rote after his teacher. Judged by this test, Mr. Pach turns out to be one who has caught the patter of modern aesthetic theory, but is almost helpless in the presence of an actual work of art. In his chapter, *From the Revolution to Renoir*, he is safe as long as he repeats the platitudes that everyone has known for years, but the moment he ventures on an independent judgment he goes far astray. At the present day, it requires no discernment to say that Ingres and Degas were masters of line, that Delacroix was a great colorist from whom the impressionists derived a large part of their technique, or that Courbet and Manet were realists who did much to redeem painting from the artificiality prevalent before their day. Unfortunately, of current platitudes, Mr. Pach swallows those that are demonstrably wrong as well as those that are right. Delacroix did not "inaugurate" the whole of our modern understanding of color: his use of color was borrowed in many of its essentials from Constable, a contemporary of his and a much greater artist. When Mr. Pach says that Renoir's

line shows an affinity with that of Ingres, he is repeating a familiar misconception, based on a superficial understanding of Renoir's pictures of the period of 1885. And when he lauds Barye to the skies, as one of the chief sculptors of his century, the hopeless superficiality of his vision becomes apparent. Barye's work is a rendering in sculpture of the husk of Delacroix—of Delacroix's mannerisms without his art. Since academicism is just this confusion of tricks of style with essential art values, the true value of Mr. Pach's strictures on academicism becomes apparent. He might, indeed, be called an academician of the Left, a writer who admires the moderns as unintelligently as most college professors admire the painters of the Renaissance.

Further evidence of this is on nearly every page of Mr. Pach's book. Coming nearer to modernism, we find him extravagantly praising Seurat, largely for the mistaken attempt to derive an aesthetic color-formula from the science of optics. At the same time he neglects Seurat's real achievement, that of putting objects in a beautifully ordered space and composing them with color. And when we find Seurat's greatness vindicated by a comparison with that sentimental eclectic, Fra Angelico, it is apparent that Mr. Pach is equally at sea in all the periods of art.

It would be difficult to discover a more extraordinary ability to miss the point than is attested by Mr. Pach's chapter on the transition to modern painting, in which he discusses Cézanne and Redon. Mr. Pach repeatedly speaks as though design and distortion entered painting with Cézanne for the first time; he utterly ignores Cézanne's sources in impressionism and he never catches sight of his most important achievement, that of building form out of color. Instead of en-

lightening us about what Cézanne's pictures really offer, he takes refuge in a mystical jargon, designed to show Cézanne's preoccupation with "laws of the mind," though, of course, what these are is never explained. Cézanne, indeed, seems particularly to tempt writers to flights of dementia: they appear to think that because he is not a readily intelligible painter they can do him justice only by writing as unintelligibly as possible, on the principle current in the middle ages that a theory of the ridiculous must itself be a ridiculous theory.

Redon, whom Mr. Pach regards as one of the pivots on which modern art turns, is a painter of pallidly unreal canvases, lacking in any profound or vigorous plastic form, and in which attempted mysticism turns out to be rather superficial decoration. In that respect he resembles the American painter, Arthur B. Davies, who is an utterly minor figure in modern art.

It is not possible to do more than mention briefly the cases in which Mr. Pach has overlooked the distinctive and important features in contemporary painting. He never discovers Rouault's obvious point of originality, his use of a broken line both to build and to decorate forms. He sees Matisse's obviously intensified color—who could fail to?—but the subtleties by which Matisse carried out his color-design, such as the use of line to reinforce color, go unmentioned. He swallows entire the meaningless cubistic claim to have "translated the chaos of the world of appearances" into "the order brought out of it by the mind." What the cubists actually did attain to was not a deeper grasp of realities, but a surface-decoration, interesting at its best, but never very moving. Since Mr. Pach cannot see this, he never understands what later painters, such as Pascin and Modigliani, got from the cubists in the

way of spatial and linear patterns and rhythms. When he comes to speak of Rousseau le Douanier, there is not a suggestion of Rousseau's plastic qualities; of his mastery of design (not literary design); of his peculiar combination of literalism and distortion; of his supreme command of space and his ability to organize it compactly and with intricate rhythms, yet with perfect clarity.

The crowning proof of Mr. Pach's ineptitude is his praise of Derain, the painter of best-sellers. He says: "Derain, of all our contemporaries the most exacting towards himself as regards the art of the Museum, goes to the world of men and women for inspiration, and tells of this world with intense yet serene enjoyment." This might with appropriateness be rewritten as follows: "Derain, of all our contemporaries the most adept in making merchandise out of the art of the museum, takes his wares to the world of men and women for profit, and so cheapens them that this world can enjoy them without effort."

In short, Mr. Pach's real achievements have been to give an elaborate pseudo-scientific dressing to platitudes, and to substitute for aesthetic perceptiveness and comprehension a mystical adoration of the great names of painting. His judgments on specific painters are not based on objective plastic facts, and the hollowness and vaporousness of his abstract principles are suffused with the emotion which he knows so well how to pour about them in order to make them impressive.

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### The Huger Elliott Systems <sup>6</sup>

MR. HUGER ELLIOTT's position as Director of Educational Work at the Metropolitan Museum, New

<sup>6</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, January, 1926.

York City, the largest art institution in America, makes his article in *The Significance of the Fine Arts* profoundly important to all people interested in art and education. It reveals how certain fundamental and universally accepted principles of educational science are utterly ignored in high and influential circles.

Mr. Elliott attempts to defend the outworn belief that conventionality and good taste are one and the same thing. The real purpose of his discussion is to fasten upon the student a set of rules that are to be followed not as suggestions but as dogmas. The statement that "standards have differed but little through the ages," reveals his blindness to what makes the individual traditions significant. It is true that there is a continuity of tradition in the great art of all ages, but it is entirely false that there is a set of rules which all artists have made it their first purpose to observe; and all of Mr. Elliott's specific comments show that it is this false sense which governs him. His discussion is chiefly incidental to an exposition of what he considers the four fundamental laws of design.

The first of these laws, "The material out of which an article is made as well as the use to which it is to be put must determine its form," he illustrates by the obvious fact that pottery made to represent basket-work, or marble seats carved to represent the trunks of trees, are aesthetically displeasing; but no one would dispute that. To be enlightening, his law should point out the uses to which someone would be tempted to put a material, and show why, for reasons other than convention or obvious practical unfitness, the uses would be improper. For example, are the porcelain stoves which we associate with Nuremberg good or bad art, and why? However, nothing of the kind is attempted. So

long as no really difficult issues are raised, Mr. Elliott may fairly be charged with taking refuge in generalizations too vague to have any meaning except for the totally illiterate.

His second law, "The structure of the object must control its design," is a confused mixture of platitude and untenable dogma. If structural elements are directly used to realize aesthetic effect, that is, if they enter into a design, then the design must take account of their possibilities. That they do often lend themselves to such use is apparent from the aesthetic utilization of flying buttresses in Gothic architecture. But, as Santayana observes, the artist may elect to make decoration conceal structure if the structure is aesthetically unpromising, and in that case Mr. Elliott's principle has no application at all. The example which he gives is that of a Louis XVI commode, in which "the design suggests a structure of three vertical parts, whereas, as a matter of fact, the structural division is in two horizontal parts. When the drawer is opened, the structure is, as it were, cut in two." The fact that the opening of the drawer cuts it in half is aesthetically irrelevant, since when anyone opens the drawer he is interested in the practical use of the object itself, and not in its appearance. When the drawer is closed, and the design specified looked at for itself, it is seen to be very good.

Another "lack of proper relation between structure and design" is the use of stone to cover the steel frame of a building. This criticism is clearly a case of habit making itself a law without even a vestige of justification. Mr. Elliott says by implication that because stone was once used wholly as structure and not as veneer, its use as veneer is forever to be *verboten*. This is the "fixed form" in its most virulent type. It



explains why so much of industrial art is "canned art."

The third law, "The ornament [if any] placed upon an article must emphasize its structure," would exclude all forms of ornament which are obviously unrelated to structure. The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, for example, is painted to represent an elaborate architectural design which corresponds to no real structure whatever. According to the statement in question, this design is basically wrong. In point of actual fact, it is recognized as one of the master-strokes of Michel Angelo's genius and as an essential part of one of the greatest achievements in the whole range of art. What Mr. Elliott really proves by such a statement is that industrial art as he teaches it is merely servile art, whereas in the principles which govern an intelligent conception of art, there is no difference between industrial art and fine art.

Mr. Elliott writes, "One would scarcely wish to have a copy of Goya's 'Execution of the Condemned' upon a cabinet." Probably most people would not, because of their preference for the merely pretty; but if anyone did, he would be guilty of no breach of good taste. To make the preferences of the majority legislative for all is to sink from art to politics, and to bad politics. But the authority of usage, and intrinsic aesthetic necessity, are two conceptions between which Mr. Elliott finds it at all times difficult or impossible to distinguish.

It is when Mr. Elliott comes to consider wall-paper that his theory of the close relation between material and decoration meets its most severe test, and suffers inglorious defeat. It is true, as he says, that wall-paper with a subdued design is ordinarily most effective, since it does not compete for attention with the pictures hung against it. But to propose that be-

cause the wall is actually flat, any suggestion of real distance is out of place, and that the same holds for the mural painter, is to go to the limit of absurdity. It implies that the solidity of the figures in the Sistine Chapel ceiling or in the Brancacci Chapel, and their placing in three-dimensional space, becomes a serious offense against taste, and that the beautiful deep spaces in Raphael's "Miracle of Bolsena" are hopelessly bad! There could be no better instance of the use of a limited formula so far beyond its proper sphere that it becomes a mere engine of enslavement.

Mr. Elliott's bias is most clearly displayed in his fourth law, "When ornament derived from Nature is used, it must be conventionalized." This he supports by a lengthy castigation of mere imitation, and an eulogy of "creation." But nowhere is it more clearly shown than here that he understands "creation" as a repetition of what others have created. That art is not imitation of Nature has become one of the stalest of clichés, but his substitution of imitation of models for imitation of Nature is no advance aesthetically. Photography is no more tiresome than the reiteration of "correct" formulas. The fact that Mr. Elliott can find no third possibility beyond literal naturalism and "conventionalization" is eloquent testimony to the limitations of his aesthetics. The only thing that has any real aesthetic significance is a treatment of natural objects that uses traditions without being bound by them, and Mr. Elliott gives no indication of ever having heard of this. Although its rôle in industrial art is necessarily restricted, in comparison with the part played by it in fine art, if it is altogether absent the industrial art becomes mere industry and not art.

The additional reason given for "conventionalization" still further illustrates the tightness of Mr.

Elliott's mind, his fondness for rigid distinctions and binding laws. In a man-made object, he says, a precise reproduction of Nature is incongruous: "The designer has nothing to do with the naturalist." Such a principle deprives the artist of the use of literal effects even when they are useful to his purpose. It would make Vermeer's or Jan van Eyck's painting of textiles inartistic, because, from the painter's point of view, textiles are "Nature," that is, they are foreign to the specific medium of paint. Here as elsewhere there is not a suggestion that all rules are conditional, subject to the requirements of individual design, that there is no rule that cannot be broken freely if the artist's purpose requires it.

Mr. Elliott speaks constantly of "reason," "reasonableness," "clear thinking" and the like. These expressions, as he uses them, mean nothing but "academic formula"; what he thus and inevitably implies is that it is always reasonable to follow convention, never reasonable to depart from it. Like many another, he stops when reason has taken him as far as he wants to go, and in place of praise of reason we then have the statement, "True beauty defies analysis." In other words, when the formula is challenged to give an account of itself, it turns out that beauty is inscrutable, and that the challenge is therefore unjustifiable. With a logic of this kind at its service, no dogma need fear dethronement. All this means that the contributions to psychological aesthetics made since 1898 by men like Santayana have received no attention from men like Mr. Elliott.

The chorus of regret at public indifference to art is swelled by Mr. Elliott's voice. He laments the decay of general taste, the callousness displayed by most people in the presence of ugly objects, and calls for a

renaissance of aesthetic feeling. The reader of his article, however, cannot but feel that the indifference is easily explained while education in art remains in the hands of teachers who worship a conventional correctness lacking all savor or color. It is impossible not to wonder whether Mr. Elliott has ever asked himself if responsibility for the condition which he deplores does not rest partly on him. Apparently he has not. To others, however, who have observed the disastrous effects of Mr. Elliott's teachings, as revealed by their practice in the class-room and in the field of industrial art, it is clearly evident that the kind of teaching represented by Mr. Elliott's dogmas is fatal to either appreciation or creation of works of art.

# Franz Cizek and the Free Expression Method<sup>1</sup>

By THOMAS MUNRO

It was largely with the aim of seeing Professor Cizek's class in operation that the writer went this summer to the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts. The experiment being tried there in children's art education was something to be enthusiastic about, for the American schools observed had shown almost everywhere a glaring need for exactly what Professor Cizek stands for: more freedom for the child to look at the world and to experiment in congenial ways of expressing himself in some artistic medium.

The school is used to receiving foreign visitors, and is courteous and clear in explaining its ideas. Cizek himself is a man to command respect: assured, quiet and intent in manner, he strikes one as an intelligent enthusiast, quite confident that the road he has mapped out is the best one. He is a teacher, not a politician, and has lately been forced by intolerant superiors to abandon a modernist class of older students in favor of conventional craft training. The outside world has honored him more than his own country.

The small work-room, crowded with some fifty boys and girls from seven or eight years to fifteen, was a delight to watch. What could more completely justify a method of instruction, one thought, than the fact that it obviously gave children such a good time in the process? No one who has even been present at

<sup>1</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, October, 1925.

an old style school art-lesson, and seen or suffered himself in the cramped, painful and smudgy task of copying, could have failed to enjoy the spectacle of animated industry. The same result, by the way, may be credited without reserve to several American schools that follow similar methods: for example, the Horace Mann and Walden Schools in New York City.

In the Vienna school it was a continued delight to look at some of the products: here was a carved wood frieze of boys playing football, in crisp, irregular rhythm; there a crowded street-scene, composed unconventionally but firmly in broad areas of pure color; farther on a group of fantastic birds against brilliant foliage. But gradually, with other pictures, came a sense of recognizing something familiar, and with it a few vague doubts. One picture after another was almost identical with those that had been printed in colors and exhibited in America: groups of children playing and dancing with flying hair and ribbons, in posterlike blocks of color against flowery fields or elaborately decorated backgrounds. Then came reminiscences of Austrian handicraft, such as the familiar porcelain figure of a child with curly hair and flowers outlined in black; echoes of the romantic colored illustrations in *Jugend*, of Böcklin and Thoma, of newer expressionist grotesqueries that had become a current formula in German exhibitions. Even the striking obviousness of street-posters blurted out here and there.

Was this the spontaneous personal expression of the students? A word with Professor Cizek and his assistant revealed their devout confidence that the work was absolutely uninfluenced. And there was no reason to doubt their entire sincerity. They moved quietly from bench to bench, looking on, giving no

directions or authoritative judgments, now and then proposing a problem or dropping some half-humorous, encouraging remark.

The children had been given no opportunity to see outside works of art, it was asserted in reply to a question: reproductions of old or modern masters were never shown them. They were actually discouraged from visiting the Vienna museums, rich in works of almost every school, for these were expressions of other ages. The class of older students had sometimes been advised to see modernist exhibitions, of expressionism, cubism and futurism, so that they might learn to express the spirit of the present age—machinery, motion, construction and power. Professor Cizek himself had originated a form of art in this spirit, which he called "constructivism" or "dynamic rhythm." His advanced class (now abandoned) had, it seemed, been taught not entirely by the free expression method, but with some definite pressure toward these modern forms. The products of this group were abstract and wholly different from the children's, but showed a marked resemblance to each other.

In short, it was obvious that in spite of the attempt at preserving spontaneity, several different types of influence had affected the work of both groups. The teacher himself, first of all, was doing more than he realized; in no other way could the marked likeness between the pictures, which stamped them at once as Cizek products, be explained. Just how this force had been exerted during the year, one could only guess at. But every teacher knows how eagerly pupils look for someone to lean on, for some advice or praise, some hint as to what to do next, and how easily any word, act or facial expression on his part may reveal what he likes, or suggest some way of procedure. Try as he



may to help children to be natural, he can only encourage his own conception of what children would naturally do.

It is another common experience of teachers that pupils imitate each other, and that no amount of praise for self-reliance can stop them. Above all, pictures exhibited on the walls are imitated, especially when thought to represent the teacher's preference. When, as in the Cizek school, work by former as well as present students is accessible to view, a strong factor is at work toward the continuing of stereotyped forms.

Finally, the student is sure to see current art outside the school, and to hear art criticism of a kind: the pictures at home, the comments about his own and other work, the shop-windows full of prints and paintings, as well as the magazines and posters above referred to. These are not all bad. The Austrian child, for example, has an unusual opportunity to see brightly decorative peasant costumes, embroidery, painted and carved wooden boxes and furniture. Even advertising reflects and cleverly popularizes, much more directly than in America, new movements in art. Any active and curious child, especially one who is himself trying to draw and paint, is sure to look avidly at such things about him, and no teacher can prevent their influences.

In view of these conditions, the ideal of keeping a child's imagination in a state of absolute purity and freedom is from the start impossible. The very attempt at such an end is evidence of the false psychology which has affected much writing on art education: of the old belief that some "self" within the child is bursting for expression and release, and that all outside forces tend to repress and enslave it.

Yet the persistent attempt to shut out influence is sure to have some effect. For which types of art are

easiest to keep away? Not the vulgar of the street, nor the childish type of the school-room, but the great traditions of the past and the best work of the present. Not readily accessible, less ostentatious than the visible clamor around, buried in frozen disorder in the museums, good works of art may never catch a child's attention or be understood, unless the teacher points them out, and invites him to see how they differ from things of a more obvious appeal. Failure to do this can have only one result: that the bad influences have practically no competition.

Their effect on the children is of course very gradual. A more detailed inspection of the Cizek class-room revealed a fact already observed in similar American schools: that in general the most original and appealing designs were those of the youngest pupils; the older the child the more his picture tended to be sentimental, conventional and weak in plastic form. A question to the teacher in charge revealed the further significant fact that the older students tend to drop out and abandon the class, which is held out of regular school hours. After its twenty years of existence no prominent artist could be named who had received his early training at the Cizek school.

What is the reason for this disheartening failure of precocious talents to develop, after a splendid start? The answer given at the school was the force of economic pressure, the demands of college and vocational training. This is doubtless true in many cases, but is it enough to explain the situation? Would not a determined interest survive these obstacles, as many artists have in the past survived them? The problem recalled a remark heard last winter from an American boy of considerable talent in modeling, who had left it to spend his spare hours at mechanical engineering.

The art classes had been fun, he remarked with a superior air, but were just "fooling around"; he wanted to "learn something" and "get somewhere." A few years of undirected toying with art materials had been enough to exhaust its attractiveness as a game, and he had come to demand something more substantial to bite down on mentally, some intellectual food for his growing curiosity about the world. For this next step in development the free expression method had no help to offer him: nothing but the vague advice to keep on being himself, and doing whatever he wanted.

The old academic method also tends to be restrictive, but not, as the free expressionists suppose, because it imparts traditions, but because it imparts too few traditions, and too little of each, so that the only ones to be followed (usually the Greek, Florentine and Dutch) seem to have absolute authority. Indeed, the restrictions of the Cizek method and the old academic method spring from the same source. The Cizek plan, far from achieving its end of freedom, robs and restricts the student when it shuts out all but a few influences, and these few none of the best. Both methods fail to aid as they might the growth of real creativeness, because they fail to present a sufficient variety of artistic forms and techniques. A broad study of traditions, it has been explained in two previous articles,<sup>2</sup> is thoroughly compatible with individual experiment, and in fact makes original choice and reorganization almost unavoidable. At the same time, unlike the free expression method, it provides the student with the artistic heritage of the past, without which his interest in art materials cannot long be sustained, nor his use of them become mature and rational.

<sup>2</sup> *A Constructive Program for Teaching Art and College Art Instruction: Its Failure and a Remedy*, by Thomas Munro, pp. 217 and 236.

# The Art Academies and Modern Education<sup>1</sup>

By THOMAS MUNRO

FOR many years the collection of modern pictures and sculpture now belonging to the Barnes Foundation has been besieged by students and teachers from art academies all over the country. Permission to view the collection was for a long time freely accorded them, but observation of their attempts to study the pictures revealed a disheartening dearth of either capacity to perceive the significant aspects of plastic art, or ability and inclination to attempt a systematic analysis of aesthetic principles. The discovery that understanding and intelligent method were lacking in the very quarters in which these things would naturally be looked for, was one of the reasons for the establishment of the Barnes Foundation as an institution prepared to give systematic training in the appreciation of art. Since the opening of the Foundation's gallery, and the inception of its active educational program, requests for admission from persons connected with academies have continued to arrive. The Foundation, desirous of coöperating with existing institutions as long as possible, began by granting the greater part of these requests.

The result of the experiment has been described at length in the article *Learning to See*, page 191. Extensive observation of the method of study, the com-

<sup>1</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, April, 1926.

ments, the general behavior of the visiting painters, has made it amply apparent that they have received no systematic training in the intelligent study of art. Except for a few individuals in whom natural endowment had not been entirely stifled by inept instruction, they proved themselves unable to discriminate plastic qualities and relationships; they lacked any conception of aesthetic principles in general, or of the application of such principles to particular works of art; they were unable to distinguish between reverence for prestige and recognition of positive accomplishment, emotional reverie and enjoyment of specific art values. Increasing experience has fortified the conviction that study of plastic art by people so little qualified to attempt it can lead only to futility.

At the same time, the multiplication of requests to visit the Foundation's gallery has given rise to a serious practical problem. The presence of large numbers of visitors of the sort described has been a distraction and an interruption of the educational work in the Foundation's own classes, and has necessitated a change in the Foundation's policy. Several members of the faculty of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts had for months enjoyed the privilege of bringing their classes to our gallery; we have been obliged to withdraw this privilege, and to deny admission to the gallery also to the members of the Art Students' League of New York. The statement of our new policy is embodied in the following letter:

JANUARY 23, 1926.

ART STUDENTS' LEAGUE,  
New York City.

DEAR SIR: We shall be obliged if you will inform your students that the Barnes Foundation is not a public gallery, but an educational institution which has its own courses and its own requirements for admission to those courses. We are compelled to ask you to make this

announcement because for the past several months your students have appeared here in various numbers and asked for admission to our gallery while the building was occupied by our regular classes; this naturally led to serious disturbance of our work, which was still further complicated by the fact that your students practically always insisted upon being admitted.

If you as an institution are interested in coöperating with us to the extent of having one or more classes study regularly at our gallery, that could be arranged providing your students would be willing to pursue systematic study as outlined in our various books, etc.

No reply to this letter was received, nor to similar suggestions made to the faculty of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

As is apparent from the second paragraph of this letter, we are reluctant to close the door to any co-operation that promises valuable results. The conditions under which such coöperation is possible, however, are not easy of attainment. The inadequate preparation of nearly all the candidates for admission who come from the art academies constitutes the chief stumbling-block, and its removal involves consideration of the methods of instruction in art which are almost universally employed. We can only make our general policy clear by pointing out what we regard as the deficiencies and positive errors in such instruction.

The general case against art teaching in the academies has long been familiar, but in order to relate effects to causes we may summarize the chief points in it. The large art schools, directed by officials drawn from conservative financial, social and intellectual circles, have always opposed radical innovation or departure from accepted standards. Invariably they have opposed the living art of the day, until it has won recognition in spite of them, and then they have employed it as a new orthodoxy, an additional weapon against any later fresh and spontaneous aesthetic expression. Such was their attitude towards Courbet,

towards the impressionists, towards Cézanne; such is their present attitude towards the successors of these artists. The frame of mind cultivated by them, the habits of perception, thought and action which they instil, have always been and still are timid, imitative, intolerant. So universal and inveterate has been their policy of imitation and repression that the word "academic" has become a synonym for all that is opposed to creative originality.

This disposition on the part of academic authorities is the more formidable because, by their control of prizes, fellowships and the hanging of pictures at exhibitions, they have means of bringing considerable pressure to bear upon students. Conformity is the price which many a pupil has to pay for the opportunity to continue his study of art, or to market his pictures when he has painted them. It is not only by such material rewards, however, that pressure is brought to bear; the constant approval of whatever is second-hand, disapproval and ridicule of what is original, are unceasing influences working towards the commonplace. Finally, academic standards, which conform closely to the popular tastes of the day, do point the way to a successful financial career. With minor exceptions, the painters whose pictures bring high prices from magazines, advertisement agencies, and the uninformed public are the characteristic product of the academies. To provide the necessary training for a commercial career, of course, is not discreditable. There is even a kind of educational service performed when the lower levels of popular taste are elevated through the dilution of what authentic artists have produced. But neither earning a living nor enlightening the extremely benighted is the same thing as creating art, and it is the sin of the academies that they have



sought to confuse things so utterly different. The result of the confusion is that the aesthetic impulse is corrupted at the source, and many persons potentially capable of some genuine creation in art are perverted into mere tradesmen in paint.

This is the familiar indictment of the academies. Its essential truth is proved by the actual results of academic training. In more than a century of operation (the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts was founded in 1806) the American art schools have turned out many competent technicians but less than half a dozen graduates who have won lasting recognition, here or abroad, as creative artists. Complacent patriotism, sentimentalism and political influence have awarded medals and commissions profusely, but significant achievement has been almost entirely the work of men independently trained. This has been the rule also in Europe, where the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* has a record of futility comparable to that of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the Chicago Art Institute, or the Art Students' League of New York. It is true that many genuine artists of the present day, such as Glackens and Prendergast in America, Picasso and Matisse abroad, did attend an academy for a year or two, mainly for the purpose of having a model and a place to paint among companions. But to the instruction they paid little attention then and little respect afterwards; they quickly disregarded what they had been told, and worked out their modes of expression alone or among independent groups of fellow-workmen. The academic exhibitions tell the same tale. After all due allowance is made for the students who fail because of lack of native ability, the dreary uniformity of the pictures hung is a depressing revelation of aesthetic poverty. No better evidence

is needed of the subjection of individuality to sterile formulas.

The cause of this poverty and sterility is to be found in the assumption which underlies substantially all academic teaching and practice. The assumption is that technique and personal, individual expression are two independent things, that the student can be trained in technique and then left free to express himself in any style he may choose. Nothing could be falser than such a view. Of course, "technique" may mean the bare handling of the medium—mixing pigments on the palette, applying them to canvas, varnishing, care of brushes, etc.—but this is not significant technique, and only the briefest instruction in it is needed. Technique, in the sense that Manet's technique differs from Ingres's, or Rembrandt's from Velasquez's, is a part of the painter's style itself: it reflects his whole manner of seeing his subject; and this is the essence of his art. "The style is the man himself" is one of the most time-honored of aesthetic axioms. To inculcate a particular technique is to fix a habit of perception; when this is done, the individual is already an echo of somebody else, and the academic fetters are firmly fastened.

For example, the accepted practice for beginners is to start with drawing from antique sculptural casts. The purpose of this is to acquire "a sound training in the fundamentals of draughtsmanship"; in other words, skill in copying the linear contours of an object, and the lighted and shaded surfaces which indicate its solidity. In this procedure, the student receives an initial impetus towards imitation of a model, towards seeing and picturing an object in terms of line and solidity with color as an after-thought, and finally, towards conceiving of beauty in line, surface, drapery,

posture and sculptural design according to Greek (usually late Greek and Roman) conventions. These habits and the skill involved are by no means fundamental to all plastic art, but only to some of the less original artists of the Italian Renaissance and its later outgrowths; hardly even to the Venetians, who conceived both contour and solidity not primarily in terms of sculpture but of color and atmosphere. It is assumed, in spite of individual variability, that this Greek-Florentine style will be best suited to every student, and his necessary starting-point. Of course, a particular student may find this style congenial to him, but it is taught, not as something which *may* meet an individual's taste, but as a standard, a rule of rightness, an objectively valid law to which all *ought* to conform.

Even in the academies which profess to leave the student free to accept or reject the technique commended to his attention, the essential damage remains. To imitate Raphael's drawing is to form the habit of seeing like Raphael: once the habit is formed, the student is no longer at liberty to take it or leave it. Some following of models, some assimilation of traditions, there must necessarily be. But freedom depends upon the multiplicity of models, of traditions. An understanding of draughtsmanship is not gained by following any one method of drawing, but by learning to draw in various ways—like Titian, like Rembrandt, like Velasquez, as well as like Leonardo. Those who have made fruitful use of a tradition have always been those who have known other traditions also. The result of making the classical type of line the only standard is to leave the student ignorant of what such line can really do, to debar him from varying it and adapting it intelligently. A formula repeated parrot-wise is not genuinely understood at all. The principle is the

same as that by which we say that a man who knows only Renaissance art, or only modern art, does not really know either. To understand each, he must see it in relation: Renaissance art as containing the germ and promise of modern art, modern art as the outgrowth of what was vital and significant in Renaissance art.

In brief, the essential truth which academic instruction ignores or neglects is that learning to do is inseparably connected with learning to see. To follow any fixed and standardized method of doing means failure in learning to see: it is merely the acquisition of a bad habit. Any habit whatever has a tendency to grow fixed and bar the way to future progress, but the fixation becomes almost insuperable when the student is told that he is learning, not, for example, Bouguereau's style of drawing and modeling, or Corot's color-scheme, but simply "Figure-Painting" or "Landscape." Whatever habits of perception his instructor may have acquired are thus riveted upon him, and only too frequently his vision is permanently narrowed and crippled.

The academic method of teaching anatomy and perspective illustrates the same inflexibility, the same ignorance of aesthetic principles. In these subjects, the student learns a host of details about natural facts, laws, and appearances. These are given him not as suggestive images to be freely transformed in design, but as necessary ways of representing an object. Of course, such knowledge is not necessarily useless: it may provide the artist with themes for design, and his design may even call in certain respects for fidelity to natural appearances. But to make the knowledge fundamental, and above all to treat it as authoritative,

is to revert to the most ancient of aesthetic fallacies—that art is imitation.

The same imitative bias appears in courses in “Composition” or “Decoration.” So far as the names go, such courses might be broad experimental surveys of the possible ways of altering appearances in the interest of better spacing, coloring, etc. The common practice, however, is to present only a few standard styles of composition and design, and to lay these down as setting a fashion to be followed by all. In view of the extreme variety and flexibility of the best classic and contemporary composition, the academic course is no more fundamental to painting than a thorough training in the heroic couplet would be to a poet about to venture into modern verse-forms. If a fair assortment of compositional designs were taught, if interested students could study some of the less popularly known traditions, both primitive and exotic, the academy could claim with justice that it was offering something of likely value to the artist. The courses would be still more genuinely fundamental if in these historical forms, common principles of design were pointed out, such as rhythm, variation and contrast of motives, and integration of plastic means.

It is not too much to say that in the entire curriculum of the academies there is nothing which is necessarily fundamental for an artist. The explanation for this fact is to be found partly in the character of the typical academy's collection of original works of art. With the single exception of the Chicago Art Institute, there is no American school of art which has a collection not notoriously inferior in quality and limited in range. Even the city collections, such as the Wiltach in Philadelphia, have mostly been filled

under the advice of academy heads and from the legacies of respectable old families, with doubtful old masters and feeble attempts by genteel academicians of the past. Since it is by looking at what others have to show that we learn to see with our own eyes, the absence of paintings by the great masters of the past and present makes education in art almost impossible.

An even more important cause of the prevailing futility is probably the character of academic personnel. The academic faculties contain many capable craftsmen, but they are practically devoid of distinctive and imaginative artists. This alone is enough to mark off the schools of art from almost every other type of educational institution in America. The atmosphere in them is repellent to men of independent mind, but is congenial to the commercial painter, the pedant, and the sentimental aesthete. All of these are, in general intellectual equipment, far inferior to the average teacher in a college, scientific or professional school. It is true that as a concession to liberalism some academies have admitted painters of modernist tendency to their staffs, but unfortunately such men have frequently been as ignorant of the painting of the past as their colleagues are of the painting of the present, and no less lacking in general culture. The result has been that their students turn out imitations of Picasso which have as little intrinsic value as the more usual imitations of Monet.

Not only are the teachers in art academies lacking in all except a strictly craftsman's knowledge of art, but they have little general culture and practically no training as educators. An independent artist, undoubtedly, may not require such training. But a good teacher of art should know something of teaching as well as of art, and be able to see his subject in some of



its wider relationships. Since most academy instructors have neither college education nor its equivalent in general reading, it goes without saying that practically none are familiar with modern educational principles. The psychology of learning, the meaning of interest, experiment, reflective analysis, coördination of studies with general development—all these conceptions as applied to the problem of making growth in art intelligent and free—have not yet reached their attention. In consequence, while all the educational world is changing, the art academies remain places where narrow, overrated technical skill is taught without scientific method, psychological insight or liberal culture.

The foregoing diagnosis of the ills afflicting academic education in art points the way to the necessary remedial measures. Chief among these is the spread of education among the teachers themselves. So long as the composition of academy faculties remains as it is, no improvement is to be hoped for. So long, also, as the pictures exhibited to students are inferior examples of the Barbizon school, contemporary imitations of Manet and Monet, and nondescript rehashes of the Dutch, Spanish and late Renaissance traditions, no instruction, however good, can be of much avail.

The Barnes Foundation's policy has been, and will be, to remedy the latter deficiency by extending to properly trained students the use of its resources. The former difficulty it cannot remedy, without coöperation on the part of the academies themselves. Until the teachers in those academies are prepared to take the steps necessary to secure such an education as is required, if they are to give fruitful instruction to their students, neither they nor their students will be qualified to make intelligent use of the Foundation's re-



sources. Meanwhile the Foundation is compelled to reserve the privilege of admission to its gallery to students in the courses conducted under its own auspices.

# The Dow Method and Public School Art <sup>1</sup>

By THOMAS MUNRO

ONE who looks over the situation in American school art work is constantly impressed with the far-reaching influence of the late Arthur Wesley Dow, of Teachers College, Columbia University. East and west, in state and city school boards, in conventions of art teachers, his name has become a rallying cry for the liberal factions, usually far in the minority, that struggle for advance toward modern methods of instruction. Many of these teachers and supervisors studied directly with Professor Dow, then went back to their home states to champion his ideas against the inertia of politics-ridden school administrations. To such lonely and hard-pressed missionaries, the memory of their leader is an almost sacred symbol for truth and progressiveness in general, and some of them regard his teaching with a veneration that is not always conducive either to clear understanding or to open-minded criticism.

If it is true that the school art situation cannot be understood without reference to Professor Dow's influence, it is doubly true that his writings cannot be justly estimated without reference to that situation as he perceived it. His life-work was a struggle against the academicism which he saw throughout the field, and his own ideals were always presented in sharp

<sup>1</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, January, 1926.

contrast to it. What was this old régime, and what did he offer instead?

A future historian may perhaps look tolerantly on the shortcomings of the early stage in American public school art work. Its leaders had a difficult task in gaining for art any recognition at all in the curriculum, against the vigorous protest of hard-headed farmers and business men, who thought anything beside the three R's a wasteful indulgence in frills and fancies. If admitted at all, it had always to conform to popular standards. Thus picture-study was made a vehicle for patriotic and moral lessons; drawing and painting consisted in trying to reproduce a box in true perspective, or a spray of flowers in pretty tints. Most teachers, of course, were almost totally untrained either in the technique or appreciation of art; they were few and overworked; hence their methods had to be capable of easy, standardized application to large classes, with clear-cut standards for grading results. Books of motives for decorative pattern were given out to them, simple, stereotyped lotus-flowers, fleur-de-lys and other conventional forms. Minute directions were prescribed for conducting an art class; in some cases, for example, each child was to have a sheet of paper printed with dots, and move his pencil in unison with the rest, three dots to the right, two down, and so on until a cat or house was outlined.

More or less pardonable as such expedients may have been at first, in frontier communities, they could only disgust a man of Dow's intelligence and European training, especially when he saw them entrenched and perpetuated long after the need had passed, in wealthy and cultivated cities, like Boston and New York. Attempting to influence certain federated groups of art teachers toward liberal ideals, he found them con-

trolled by politicians, incredibly narrow-minded, without genuine interest in either art or education, hand in glove with dealers in text-books and art materials, who found ways to checkmate any forward-looking proposal. Within these federations, and against reactionary school boards everywhere, his pupils and their liberal allies are still struggling with little success, in great need of organized effort to unite and support them.

Dow was far from unsuccessful, however, in gathering about him groups of devoted followers, from his first efforts in Boston in 1889, through his years of teaching at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, at the Art Students' League, in summers at Ipswich, Massachusetts, and from 1904 until the day of his death in 1922, as head of the department of Fine Arts at Teachers College. No small part of his influence at all these places was due to a personality that drew affection and sympathetic response to his enthusiasm, as well as respect for his clear and sensible thinking.

The method elaborated in these years of teaching was first conceived in Boston, with the aid of Ernest Fenollosa, then in charge of the Japanese collections in the Museum of Fine Arts, and was expressed in the widely-used book entitled *Composition*.<sup>2</sup> Polemically, the idea most insisted on there is the falsity of the academic division of art into representative and decorative, both conceived as imitation, the one of natural objects and the other of conventional historic patterns. On the contrary, said Dow, both aspects should be sought together, natural objects being taken as themes for creating new, beautiful forms. Instead of the old

<sup>2</sup> Ninth edition, N. Y., 1923. See also *Theory and Practice of Teaching Art and Constructive Art Teaching*, both published by Teachers College.

copying method he proposed instruction in the principles of design or composition, which he redefined and listed under the headings of Opposition, Transition, Subordination, Repetition and Symmetry. Each he illustrated with many examples chosen with catholic taste and an eye to underlying resemblances from the Greek, Oriental, Gothic, Renaissance and modern traditions, from textile, pottery, furniture and architecture as well as from painting and sculpture. This approach he believed would involve "a new classification of the world's art, cutting across the historical, topical and geographical lines of development . . . with many examples differing as to time, locality, material and subject, but alike in art-structure." The elements in art he classified as line, notan (dark-and-light), and color, and went on to show how the principles of harmonious composition can be realized in each, and in combinations of them.

So stated in general, these principles are unexceptionable, and there is no doubt that their adoption and study would provide a considerable advance over most of the methods now in use. But many significant things have happened in the fields of educational and aesthetic psychology since Professor Dow formulated his principles, in the light of which his way of presenting the subject to students requires considerable modification. His former pupils and successors at Teachers College, Horace Mann, Lincoln and other experimental schools have not been slow to make such changes in their actual conduct of the work, although respect for his memory has restrained explicit criticism.

Some of these teachers, for example, are calling the attention of students to post-impressionist tendencies in design, toward which, although tolerant, Professor Dow had no positive sympathy. All are attempting

more strenuously to encourage individual variation and originality in creating new designs, an aim which Dow recognized in general, but for which there was little place in his rather standardized system of procedure. There is greater attention also to the problems of stimulating the interest of children in art work, and correlating it with other phases of their mental growth. In view of these ends, pupils are led to choose subjects for plastic expression from their own experience. By the project method and other devices their initiative is encouraged, and art-work made a process of gradual, continuous enrichment of everyday life. They are following no rigid order of progress, and are using color from the start, not beginning with abstract lines—a step whose propriety Dow admitted in the case of young pupils only, and which he never incorporated in his own method.

Along with these changes, Professor Dow's successors have found it possible to retain and reapply a large part of his method, especially the insistence on principles of design. But his own writings give little indication that in recent years he had reconsidered the method in the light of newer psychological tendencies, especially the Deweyan conception of education as natural growth. The order of steps which he prescribes is one of abstract logical classification, rather than of the necessary sequence of steps in mental development. Without applying her criticism explicitly to the Dow method, Miss Belle Boas (a former pupil, now Director of Fine Arts at the Horace Mann School) has put her finger upon its essential practical weakness: "A course of study in spelling doesn't arbitrarily begin with words of one syllable in the first grade to progress to complicated six-syllable words in the high school, but rather follows the growth in the child's vocabulary

as he finds his spelling complexities grow through his needs."<sup>3</sup>

Dow's method begins with what is logically simplest, the basic elements in a work of art, such as lines, dark and light spots, hues and intensities, and with the general definitions of the principles of design. From these atomic elements he invites the pupil to put together a beautiful form, leading him on in strict logical order from simple to complex: first straight lines, properly spaced, then curves, then two values of light and dark, then three, four, five values, then one hue in two and three values, two hues and so on until a form as complex as an ordinary painting is finally reached. This is a "natural method," says Dow, "of exercises in progressive order, first building up very simple harmonies, then proceeding on to the highest forms of composition. . . . It offers a means of training for the creative artist . . ."

To a mature and scientific mind such a schematic analysis of art is undeniably interesting, and to a teacher it may be helpful as a reference map of the field. But to propose it as a method of creating beautiful forms is to reveal a decided lack of familiarity with the psychology of aesthetic creation. New and vital plastic forms are rarely if ever conceived through such a course of plodding synthesis, but rather all at once as a new vision, the product, largely impulsive and automatic, of many experiences in looking at nature and art with a selective and reconstructing eye. The memory of elements and principles may come in to refine and proportion, after synthesis or along with it, each of the various phases of intelligent organization occurring now and then, in no fixed order, as the trend

<sup>3</sup> *Art in the School*, 1924, p. 20.



of the situation indicates. This does not mean that rational analysis and synthesis, with use of general principles, have no place in art education; but that the primary concern of the teacher is to secure vitality and freedom for perception, emotion and imagination. Intelligence can liberate and harmonize creative impulses, but it can never build out of bare logical concepts a form touched with life.

The Chinese and Japanese artists, whom Professor Dow constantly holds up as examples, sometimes adhered strictly to certain fixed rules, and their works, pruned down to the last degree of subtle economy, provide him with many instances of design from a few means, such as two values of a single hue. But what we prize most in these works is the inventive imagination that worked through the rules (often irrelevant religious tenets) to some unique and striking result. When the rules alone are grasped, the products are as mechanical and lifeless as the pictures in the Japanese manner by Dow and his pupils, which are scattered as models through the book.

Aside from educational method, there are serious misconceptions of plastic form involved in Professor Dow's analysis—some of them springing, perhaps, from his preoccupation with the Japanese form. Had his feeling for Venetian painting, for Renoir, Cézanne and contemporary movements, been as appreciative as for the Japanese print, he would have seen more clearly the possible functions of color, merged with line and light, in building up structure and organizing a picture with pervasive atmosphere. Instead, he conceived of design in basically linear terms: "A picture may be said to be in its beginning actually a pattern of lines." On the Line-idea "hinges the excellence of the whole,

for no delicacy of tone or harmony of color can remedy a bad proportion.”<sup>4</sup> This misses entirely the fact, all-important in painting since the Venetians, that color can be so merged with a linear pattern (not superficially added to it) as to transform entirely the nature of that pattern and the rightness of its proportions.

To the Japanese, whom he praises for thinking of painting as “the art of two dimensions,” may also be due his tendency to conceive design as flat, and his failure to grasp the function of solidity and depth in painting. For a painter to work for roundness and solidity, he thought, was to imitate natural objects and to encroach on sculpture; light and dark were of value chiefly as contrasting areas on a flat surface, rather than as means of modeling. Such a defense of exotic forms was no doubt salutary at a time when most academic painters knew only the Florentine and Dutch. But to ignore the building up of designs of solid objects in deep space, and the relation of color thereto, is to ignore the main achievement of European painting from Giotto to Cézanne, and to leave one’s account of plastic design sadly incomplete.

Although neglecting one of the most important elements in pictorial space, the third dimension, Professor Dow declares the final criterion of harmony in design to be Good Spacing. Yet he leaves its meaning undefined (“The mystery of Spacing will be revealed to the mind that has developed Appreciation”), and gives little reason why the selected examples of good spacing are good.

In short, Professor Dow’s “synthetic” presentation of design fails in several ways to become genuinely or completely synthetic. It is of doubtful utility as a help to any creative synthesis, because, as noted above, it

<sup>4</sup> *Composition*, p. 44.

is foreign in its method to the psychology of all artistic growth and construction. Leaving out organic color, depth and solidity, it is incomplete as a theoretical account of the important elements in plastic design, and such elements as it gives are left more or less in isolation: there is no indication, that is, how these elements are completely merged in the color-line-and-light forms of modern painting. Yet, for all its inadequacies, it deserves respect as a landmark in American education, for its clear statement of a method still far in advance of those used in most schools, and for the example it offers of a sensitive and penetrating mind at work upon a generous variety of artistic forms.

# The Graphic Sketch Club and Art Education <sup>1</sup>

By LAURENCE BUERMAYER

THE Graphic Sketch Club is not only a well-known and much-admired institution in Philadelphia, it is also a potent influence in giving form and currency to ideals and methods in art-education. Its founder and supporter, Mr. S. S. Fleisher, winner of the Bok prize in 1924, has been heralded by the newspapers and by those whose standards are set by newspaper critics, as an authority on the appreciation of art and the training of artists. His conceptions and purposes were even brought to bear on the new policy in education in art in the public schools. They are thus a matter of more than merely personal interest, and a survey of them, as they are revealed in the activities of the Graphic Sketch Club, is important as indicating their real significance and their educational potentialities.

The stated purpose of the Graphic Sketch Club is primarily to diffuse an appreciation of art among people in all stations of life; secondarily, it is to supply to those desiring it instruction in the practice of painting and sculpture. Among the teachers have been members of the faculty of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, whose services are paid for by the club and provided free to its students. Membership in the classes is unrestricted, since the production of artists is only a secondary intention, and even such pupils as

<sup>1</sup> From *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, April, 1925.

display no talent are permitted to continue as students.

The buildings of the club contain not only classrooms, but also a museum. In this are exhibited paintings and works of sculpture by students, past and present; it contains also vases, fabrics, and *objets d'art*, not the work of members. In addition, a church-building in the Byzantine style, bought by Mr. Fleisher and joined to the club-house, forms a shrine or, as it is called, the "Sanctuary." In this of course no religious exercises are held, but its atmosphere, colored lights, mural decorations, and so on are designed to produce a religious frame of mind, propitious to the worship of art as conventionally conceived. Here, rather than in the class-rooms, the purpose of the club is focussed in the effort to furnish a vivid and moving experience of beauty, both as an end in itself and as an antidote for the demoralizing influence of the surrounding slum.

With the function of the Graphic Sketch Club as a social service station we are not here concerned, but only with its function as a school of art. Is the conception of art and of its relation to the rest of life which underlies the club's activities, a true and valuable one? Is any program for the public schools into which this conception enters likely to be intelligent and valuable? Neither kindness of heart nor goodness of intentions is any guarantee of the justness of opinions or of the objective value of the influence flowing from them. Nothing, indeed, is more often damaging in its consequences than misdirected good will, since this makes criticism seem odious and so disarms opposition. An objective estimate of the Graphic Sketch Club's activities is therefore of the utmost importance to anyone interested in knowing what influences in the art life of Philadelphia truly promote or retard the cause of education.

Except as regards a series of free Sunday concerts, all the expenses of the Graphic Sketch Club are met by Mr. Fleisher. The result is inevitably that the members of the club are put in the position of beneficiaries of charity, a result which no generous disposition can really conceal. They are given something, not aided to secure something for themselves. At the start, no doubt, this was inevitable, since before aesthetic interest is awakened no one will pay for art; but as interest grows its reality should be attested by some sacrifice on its behalf. Indeed, the genuineness of any interest is open to doubt until it is proved by other satisfactions foregone. Unfortunately, the Graphic Sketch Club has not only never reached, but has never made any advance toward, financial independence: it remains wholly supported by Mr. Fleisher. Doubtless it could never be made wholly self-supporting without serious curtailment of its activities, but any scale of charges, flexible enough to provide merely nominal rates for the very poor, would be better than none. It would enable those who paid to feel that they had some *right* to what they got, that it was in some degree their own, and not merely the bread of charity.

It may seem that these considerations are germane only to the aspect of the Graphic Sketch Club in which we have disclaimed interest, and that they have nothing to do with its functions as a school of art. Such a suggestion, however, implies a view of art the perniciousness of which can hardly be overestimated: the view that it is possible to cultivate art in isolation, in the same way that one may be a devout Christian on Sundays and a driver of shrewd and sharp bargains the rest of the week. In truth, art is an expression of personality in its entirety, and the habits on which aesthetic appreciation and production depend are an in-

tegral part of the whole character. There is no true education in art which is not education in the broadest sense, in the sense of continuous exercise of an individual's intelligence and remoulding of his habits. Self-reliance and initiative are not something which can be sapped in one part of life and cultivated in another, and we expect the loss of integrity which ensues upon pauperization to be as destructive of one's art as it is of one's morals.

What, then, is an artist? He is a man who can see and set forth something which is his own and no one else's, who has a vision that has never before been expressed. Originality, in other words, is the *sine qua non* of art. Originality is of course a matter of degree: it need not be the revolutionary originality of Giotto or Rembrandt, and it always depends upon an assimilation of traditions; unless, however, a painter or writer or musician makes a genuinely personal use of traditions, adds to them something distinctively his own, he is an "artist" only by courtesy. But since what is new seems alien, since it can be understood and appreciated only at the expense of some change of habits, it is almost always unwelcome at first, and to set it forth and stand by it requires resolution. No one is entitled to utter a syllable on art who has not taken to heart the most obvious lesson of its history, that the artist—as distinct from the artisan in paint, who makes merchandise of what others have created—must face the fire from all contemporary vested interests. It is thus that independence fortified by courage is the first condition of aesthetic achievement, and anything that strikes at this strikes at the heart of the creative impulse. This is exactly what charity does: it fosters a deferential, subservient, imitative disposition. No eleemosynary institution promotes self-expression, but



rather self-submergence, a humble and pliable attitude toward a benefactor—in short, the soup-kitchen frame of mind.

Such misgivings about the effect of charity are amply confirmed when we come to test the pudding by the eating. An examination of the work of the Graphic Sketch Club pupils, as this is exhibited in the buildings, reveals no genuine aesthetic expressiveness. In painting, there are one or two fairly skilful attempts at Rembrandtesque chiaroscuro, and an occasional superficial imitation of Cézanne. The great majority of paintings, however, hark back to the Dutch tradition, watered down through many generations of academic painters; or to Monet, *via* the exaggeration of his light and shade made by Hassam and the Delaware River School; or to Manet, through Sargent's attenuated version of him. All these traditions have been feebly employed, with no eye to essentials, and no vestige of virile individual purpose. On the top floor, a room used by the life class is hung with the usual attempts in charcoal at photographic representation of the nude. There is no evidence that the slightest attempt has been made to acquaint the students with the newer principles in design worked out by the leading artists of the past and present generations.

The sculpture is of about equal value. Most of it consists of plaster heads, the most skilful of which have the literal accuracy of plaster casts. Of a sense of form in mass, line, or surface, or of a penetrating grasp of essentials in portraiture, they have none. There are many small nudes, in which the Greek and Renaissance traditions are for the thousandth time embodied, but their time-worn insipid gracefulness gives them no more aesthetic *raison d'être* than belongs to the product of any machine.

The statue which is regarded as the masterpiece of the school, if we may judge by the fact that replicas of it appear in various rooms, is "Man Carving Out His Own Destiny." The appeal of this is obviously due in large part to the moral it seeks to point—one so inappropriate, under the circumstances, that we might be led to infer ironic intent if there were any other indication of subtlety. The conception is very difficult of treatment in sculptural form, but it is crudely carried out in imitation of Rodin, part of the block being left rough, the man emerging from it. There are a few other echoes of Rodin, attaining only soft and un-sculptural formlessness. Neither here nor elsewhere is there any evidence of intelligent observation of the available photographs of statues by the Egyptians, the more powerful Greeks, or Michel Angelo.

The prevailing low level of taste and discrimination is displayed also in the choice and arrangement of the things not made by members of the club. There are many photographs of great paintings and works of sculpture, but these are aimlessly jumbled together. Not only is there no attempt to show the progress of art or the continuity of traditions, but what is execrable rubs elbows with what is fine: photographs of banal prettiness are displayed close beside a Masaccio, and a Henner is shown along with works of Greek and Egyptian sculpture. A few well-executed old textiles are mixed with much larger numbers of relics of no artistic value, antiques interesting only for their historical associations, which suggest an old curiosity shop. In the Sanctuary, attention is distracted from the dignified proportions of the little church by imitative frescoes crudely drawn, unimaginative, and garishly colored.

For the bad quality of the work done the excuse

is readily offered, "But it is the work of an ignorant immigrant boy." It is assumed that such an extenuating circumstance not only explains, but justifies the work: that it entitles it to admiration. Perhaps; but not to admiration for its aesthetic qualities, which is the important point, and one straightway forgotten. The habit of pleading excuses for failures thus becomes a habit of shielding them from criticism: the student goes forth with a fixed habit of feeling that he is immune from the application of all rigorous standards. His tendency is thus established to exploit his difficulties and hardships, and to shirk artistic responsibility.

Some of the work of the students shows skill in execution, and suggests that talent was really at work, and might, given more favorable conditions, have developed into real artistry instead of being crushed into colorless conformity. So we are brought back to the atmosphere of the club. In the principal room, on the first floor, brightly lighted, and in a position that makes it inevitably call to mind the altar-piece of a church, hangs a portrait of Mr. Fleisher. With this reminder of the source of every blessing constantly before them, the students are hardly to be blamed if they feel that vigorous self-assertion would be in bad taste. The raising of fundamental issues, the defence of new ideas, which may cause dissension—and it is out of these things that progress comes—is difficult in an atmosphere of amiable tolerance, which suffuses with glamour good and bad alike. It is doubly difficult when the charge of personal ingratitude is to be expected. The sort of "criticism" which is welcomed by the club, and the quality of mind which it seeks to have associated with itself, may be judged from the

mawkishly doting and atrociously written little pamphlet in praise of it, which it distributes from its office.

This general submergence of personality is powerfully contributed to by the "religious" atmosphere of the Sanctuary. The hush, the semi-darkness, the colored lights here may promote a spirit of peace, of mystic exaltation, but only in one who is passive, sentimental, worshipful of authority, susceptible to mystification. They put to sleep the critical faculties, and beguile the spectator into accepting the hopeless aesthetic badness of the things about him. They invite to languorous daydreaming, and the result is apparent throughout the club, in work that shows no interest in the possibilities of the real world, but rather a flight into a realm of conventional romanticism and cloying prettiness. They inspire only as drugs inspire, and under the veil of illusion which they spread, motives far from aesthetic take form and grow.

These motives soon reveal themselves as predominantly commercial. Skill with the brush, softness, sweetness, have a very real value—a value in dollars and cents. There is a large demand for sentimental chromos and for suavely painted portraits that shall flatter their sitters; to satisfy this demand is, apart from the debauchery of public taste involved, a legitimate way of making a living. The opportunity to make a living in this way is one which many would have lacked but for Mr. Fleisher, and for this he is entitled to claim such credit as is his due. Criticism can only arise when instruction in the plying of a trade is confused with education in art, when, in accordance with popular superstition, it is supposed that a painter is *ipso facto* an artist.

Exactly such a confusion is implied in Mr. Fleisher's

public statement—and in this he is the spokesman for many—that for the appreciation of art no technical understanding is necessary. There is a sense in which this is true: to appreciate painting we do not need to be painters ourselves. But it is not in this sense that it is likely to be understood. Most of those who heard it and were reassured and pleased by it, undoubtedly supposed it to mean that the habits of observation gained from daily life are adequate for the appreciation of art. In this sense it is flagrantly and dangerously false.

As every student of psychology knows, our observation of anything depends almost wholly upon our habits. In considering an object, we notice in it only what we are accustomed to notice—that is to say, qualities that indicate probable behavior, or that have an immediate instinctive appeal, such as the kindliness of a face or the bloom of fruits and flowers. Unless instructed to the contrary, therefore, we look for such things also in works of art, and consider them as we would photographs, interesting for what they portray. We have not, however, reached the threshold of art until we have passed beyond such sentimental and narrative interests, and learned to look for something altogether different. Until, in other words, we have renounced the conventional attitude toward things, and have acquired, as has been said, “new eyes for old.”

These are acquired by the habit of asking about a picture such questions as the following: Is the painter alive to color-values and color-relations? Has he a sense for the effective grouping of objects, or is his composition diffuse and disorderly? Is his line sensitive and expressive, or inert and meaningless? Until one has learned to ask and answer questions of this sort, what he says or thinks or supposes himself to enjoy has nothing to do with art at all. He is in the

position of one who believes that a play is good if it ends happily, or that history is true if it is an inspiration to patriotism.

Conventionality, shrinking from all that requires effort and initiative, and making it the artist's rôle to minister to the unaesthetic fancies of those who have had no "technical training" and are happy to know that the omission makes no difference, is above everything else responsible for our prevailing aesthetic barbarism. This barbarism is to be found no less in our popular artists than in our public, and there is no remedy for it except in an education that strikes at the root of the evil. Only as intelligence is liberated and directed to the work of assuring free self-expression to the personality as a whole, only as the standard of criticism is raised and bad work proclaimed for what it is, irrespective of its authority or popular vogue, will education become more than a delusion and a sham. Such education requires, in those who direct it, a degree of special knowledge, of freedom from the delusions of the market-place, which are assuredly not to be expected in the acclaimed spokesmen of the market-place. "Popular" art is commercial, sentimental, tawdry art, and a program of education which looks to it for standards is a betrayal of every educational ideal.

The Graphic Sketch Club, with its unorganized mixture of literary, historical, religious, and threadbare plastic values, useful, of course, for self-advancement, is the fortress of conventionalism, and what it has contributed to real education is substantially nothing. An intelligent conception of life, a willingness to use the traditions handed down from the past not as tricks of the trade but as a means of securing a personal, individual grasp of things, are far removed from it. The examples of art displayed in its buildings, com-



monplace and uninspiring as they are, are not on as low a level as the chromos and grocery-calendars in the near-by shop-windows; the club, in all probability, thus contributes to the transition from utter aesthetic savagery to barbarism. To a continued advance, from barbarism to civilization, it cannot contribute. Complacent mediocrity, a numbed critical sense, and an invitation to aimless reverie—it is not from these things that creation comes. The facile emotionalism of its atmosphere can only foster daydreams, in which old habits are entrenched, and the fibre of the students' minds made more flabby. It is impossible not to feel, in the Graphic Sketch Club's interior and in the work of its students, the same quality that we feel in the popular moving picture or novel—a quality which inevitably attends the unintelligent out-pouring of emotion. It is savorless, stifling, unreal.

In a dismal and sordid slum, no doubt, the temptation to seek a refuge from reality is very strong, and it is hard to begrudge to those so tempted the relief that any opiate may bring. Equally hard is it to begrudge to anyone the opportunity to better his worldly fortunes by becoming a manufacturer of colored photographs and easily marketable illustrations. But when Mr. Fleisher has received the recognition due him for mitigating the rigors of poverty and for seeking, to the limits of his knowledge, to serve the cause of art, the fact remains that the only art he has served is that in which sentimentalism joins hands with commercialism to usurp the place which real aesthetic vision should fill.

For many, no doubt, a very small modicum of aesthetic appreciation or achievement is all that is possible; where little good can be hoped for, little evil need be feared; here, the activities of the Graphic Sketch



Club need not be deplored and may perhaps even be welcomed. Yet as a model for *education*, as a means for securing the unfolding of all the individual's powers, and for making of him a unique personality, with a view of the world truly his own, the Graphic Sketch Club and all for which it stands represent not a part of the ideal, but one of the things against which the ideal must struggle to survive.

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